

SEVEN MILES FOR A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The Ron Burton Training Village (RBTv) prepares young men to live a Spirit-filled life. This preparation is essential because many of the young men that attend RBTv face difficult challenges in their lives. This thesis highlights the problems our young men face today and offers biblical solutions for overcoming these problems. RBTv is a five-week Christian program. Each week the campers cover one of four biblical virtues of love, peace, patience, and humility. These principles are presented within a formal curriculum of lessons, sermons and activities. The fifth week culminates in a review of these four virtues, including sporting events, concerts, and awards. Since many campers return year after year, continuity between summers is essential. RBTv enhances this continuity through follow-up meetings, church placements, and take-home workbooks, including lessons and activities. Although always in the process of improving, RBTv is encouraged by the evidence of Christian growth and success in the lives of the young men who have attending the program.

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ABSTRACT

The Ron Burton Training Village (RBTv) prepares young men to live a Spirit-filled life. Many of the young men that attend RBTv face difficult challenges in their lives. This thesis highlights the problems our young men face and offers biblical solutions for overcoming these problems. Each week the campers cover one of four biblical virtues of love, peace, patience, and humility. These principles are presented within a formal curriculum of lessons, sermons and activities. Since many campers return every year, continuity between summers is essential. RBTv enhances this continuity through meetings, church placements, and take-home workbooks, including lessons and activities.

CHAPTER ONE

MILE 1: HELP! CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?

It's 4 A.M. and the alarm clock sounds. It's my older brother's mellifluous voice humming his version of the old Negro spiritual "Wade in the Water". He sings, "I...Got a feelin. I...Got a feelin'brother...I got a feelin...It's time to get up and run..." Nearly one hundred boys are about to start their day with a rude-awakening. A seven-mile run! "Lets go, lets go, lets go! Another salubrious day," Ron Jr. shouts. "It's time to get up! Put your sweats on and your feet on the floor. Let's go, let's go!"

It's life as usual at the Ron Burton Training Village. It's a place where junior and senior age boys learn to grow in the Lord and become stalwart, godly young men. More importantly, it's a place where kids can escape and learn what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ Jesus. And for most of these young men, the road from whence they come has not been easy.

THE PROBLEM

One of the most troubling concerns I have today is watching our campers fall victim to the many pitfalls that plague our cities and local communities. Temptations and trials our campers experience on a regular basis cause them to forget many of the biblical principles we teach at RBTV. Because the peer pressure to do wrong is so great, it's hard for them to stay on God's path. Once they leave RBTV, many campers end up going back to their old ways. The purpose of this thesis project is help the kids that attend the Ron Burton Training Village, live a Spirit-filled Christian life when they go back home.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM: REAL LIFE STORIES



(Campers running the seven miles)



(Camper Nick White fights through the pain)



(On right: Chris Getchell sings in RBTV Choir)

When Chris Getchell was eleven years old, he says he remembers watching his mother pass out on the kitchen floor completely drunk. “And I just broke down. I couldn’t take it anymore,” Chris says. “I remember praying, just crying out, ‘Like God, Help me!’ Just come down here and help me. I am sick of this.”

John Evans grew up without his dad. Throughout much of his pre-teenage years he was sexually abused by his uncle. He did not tell anyone he was being abused. John says he grew up quiet, angry, and confused. Today he battles with depression and homosexuality.



(Camper Quame Grant running the seven miles)

Quame Grant is fifteen years old and a star athlete. He was captain of his football team and on the honor roll. He has all the potential in the world to play Division I college football. His brother Tarik is attending Bentley College on a full academic scholarship. Just recently their mother called me saying she doesn’t understand why she

is losing Quame to the street. “He is going through a state of rebellion,” Mrs. Kaidi Grant says. “He is failing the ninth grade, sexually active, and recently has a court date for an alleged attempted robbery. He was doing so well and now, all of a sudden, he has become so defiant that I have sent him away to live with his biological father in Connecticut. And things continue to get worse. Is there anything you can do for my son?”

My father, Ron Burton, used to say to me that “life is a journey, not a destination.” Unfortunately, the problems many young people face throughout their journeys are serious and need immediate attention. Getting kids the proper help is a matter of life and death. David Elkind warns, “When homicide is a leading cause of death among youth, and when a third of high school seniors report having five or more drinks within a two-week period, we have a dangerous social problem that is getting out of hand.”⁴⁷ And this problem rages on as adults ignore or are too overwhelmed to confront the sexual immorality, drugs, alcohol, and pornography that run rampant in so many communities. Elkind continues, “There is little or no place for adolescence in American society today -not in our homes, not in our schools, and not in society at

1. David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1998), 239.

large. We have, in effect, all but eliminated this age period as a distinct stage in the life cycle.”² Consequently, many teens are angry, confused, and bitter about life. Often they come from homes where parents are divorced or dad is nowhere in the picture. They are troubled and want answers to why life is such a struggle. As they search for a place to fit in, they find themselves making several poor choices that lead them into deeper trouble. “A troubled youth” Dwight Spotts says, “ is a young person, male or female, who mistrust others, lacks significant adults to provide emotional support and to model appropriate behavior, has primitive social values, turns to peers to find acceptance and approval. A troubled youth will do almost anything to find acceptance and love and has virtually no relationship with God.”³

Most of the campers who come to the Ron Burton Training Village (RBTv) fit Spotts definition. They have grown up with the attitude that it’s just not cool to pray, read the Bible, or sing camp songs together. In their hometowns all they encounter is hurt, name-calling, street violence, and neglect. Last summer, one camper told me that he never wants to return home because of the pain his parents put him through. He’d rather simply try to make it on his own. Our young

² Elkind, 3.

³ Dwight Spotts & David Veerman, *Reaching Out to Troubled Youth* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 27.

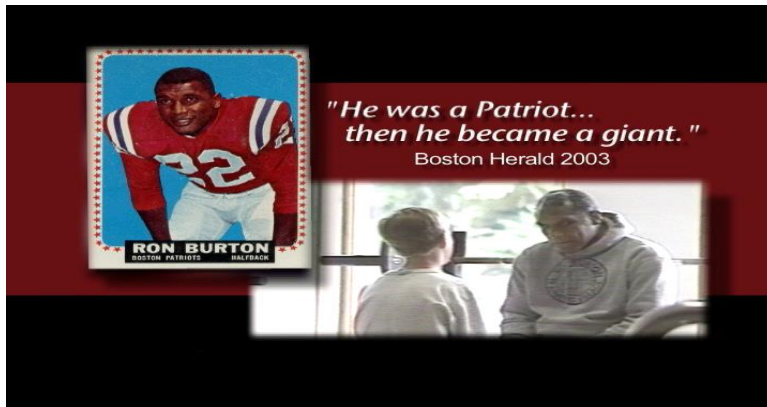
people are in trouble today because they are not receiving the love God intended them to have. When we neglect to show our young people the God's love, we set them up for failure. Oddly enough, when they do fail repeatedly our society hopes they will just go away. When that wish doesn't happen, we cry for stricter laws... "Try them as adults!" Spotts summarizes this national tragedy:

Our society tends to ignore children in trouble-usually preferring to remove them from sight. Some citizens even demand severe punishment for these children. An adult who would punish children stricken with measles or leukemia would be considered insane. Yet youngsters battered or neglected by alcoholic parents, children who run away because their homes are without love or because they are being hurt at school, or children who are being beaten and raped are often ignored or punished.⁴

When Ron Burton founded his Training Village in 1985, he knew his vision could be part of the solution to the crises in these precious young lives. His mission was to show youth how to "Love One Another" the way Christ loves us. Ron knew God called him to reach out to young people, and Ron would go about his mission in a very unique way.

⁴ Spotts & Veerman 13.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN: RON BURTON'S STORY



Ron Burton was the first player ever drafted by the Boston Patriots (the forerunners of today's New England Patriots). He was their star running back from 1960-1966. When he passed away in 2003 from bone cancer, the Boston Herald printed a full page that read, *"He was a Patriot. Then he became a giant."* Ron became a giant because long after his playing days on the gridiron were over, he opened up the Ron Burton Training Village. He would teach young people how to be successful both on and off the playing field. His goal was to teach them the same values he learned as a poor boy growing up in Springfield, Ohio; to follow Christ, to become leaders amongst their own peers. Ron had an amazing ability to reach young people because he knew what it was like to struggle in his own life. When Ron was a kid back in Springfield, they called him "nothing." He weighed nothing. He had

nothing. So the name stuck. His mom passed away when he was young, and his dad was sick and living with Ron's uncle. He spent most days alone, or at church with his grandmother, a Baptist minister. He sang in the choir. He prayed. He found his faith. But most of all, he found a place where he truly belonged. But to his classmates, he was still a square. He was choirboy in a town of tough kids and they never let him forget it.

Ron did not grow up with a lot of talent. In fact when he first tried out for football, the coach said he wasn't even good enough to get a uniform. He had no moves and certainly no speed. "Nothing." Finally after a few months of pleading, he got a jersey but for two years he never played a single down. It wasn't until the last play in the last game of his eighth grade season that the coach called Ron's name, fourth quarter and only 35 seconds left. Nearly every player on the bench was injured, except Ron. With nowhere else to turn, "Nothing" got the call. They only needed him to run three yards. He gave them ten. Afterwards, a high school coach told Ron that he was impressed with Ron's courage and determination. Then the coach looked him in the eye, and gave Ron some of the best advice he'd ever received: "If you want to be truly

great, get up five days a week at 4:30AM, and run seven miles.” Ron’s training had begun.

By the time he was a senior in high school, Ron had broken every football record in Ohio. He was an All-American. Ron received 47 scholarship offers to all the best schools in the nation. He ended up attending Northwestern University. Ron was so poor, the folks in his town held a “Ron Burton Day” so that when he went off to school he would look respectable. “I felt so loved. I felt so cared for. It was overwhelming. It changed everything,” Ron said. After a successful career at Northwestern, he went on to play for the Boston Patriots for six seasons. Ron always said that because God had given him so much, one day he would pay it all back. And in the summer of 1985, he withdrew his life savings, and bought 305 acres in Hubbardston, Massachusetts. The Ron Burton Training Village was born.

A PLACE TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

There is no other place quite like the Ron Burton Training Village. The camp is tucked away deep in the woods of central Massachusetts. It's a beautiful village different from any other camp in the country, surrounded by 305 acres of tall pine, oak, and maple trees that stretch for miles.

Regardless of nationality, socioeconomic background, or religious upbringing, the campers all have one thing in common: everyone at RBTV wants to better himself. Jim Burns writes, “Create a positive atmosphere. Programs rise and fall around the aspect of atmosphere.”⁵ And indeed, RBTV has created that much needed environment.



(One of the many gardens at RBTV.)



(The White House at RBTV)

Far away from urban life, the campers are surrounded by lakes, trees, streams, and gardens. Ron built gazebos, football fields, and a

⁵ Jim Burns, *The Youth Builder* (Eugene Oregon: Harvest House, 1988), 173.

giant amphitheater. The campers can walk through and sit in the gardens. But more importantly for five straight weeks they discover acceptance and love.



(Lake Waite on a warm summer day.)

There is a lake, called Lake Waite, located on the southwest side of the campsite. And at dusk, the lake remains completely still like a sheet of glass. When the sun goes down and reflects off the lake, God's serenity and natural beauty captivates all who sit down beside it.



(Campers enjoy some peace and quiet by the lake.)

RBTV is a perfect atmosphere for preaching the Gospel. “Effectively communicating to young people is essentially the ability to create an atmosphere or environment that will be conducive to the learning process. Two ingredients are absolutely necessary in creating an environment that is conducive for communication with young people: acceptance and love.”⁶



(Campers from the RBTV Red Sox Retreats.)

And for the past 21 years, the RBTV has loved and accepted more than 3000 young men and shared with them the love of God.

Since my father’s passing in 2003, it has been my responsibility to carry out his legacy and fulfill the call God has placed on my life. Now is the time to lead this Christian Sports camp into its next stage. In this stage I shall try better to address my deep concern that when the campers return home, their unhealthy environments cause them to

⁶ Burns, 51.

forget many of the biblical principles taught at RBTV. Over the past few years, I have also discovered once they go back to their communities they often give in to the temptations that surround them. They are given the tools to succeed but they are not putting them into practice. Although some campers do begin to live a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, fruitful life, most face a serious challenge to this Spirit-filled life because of the cunning, dark, schemes of Satan. They are constantly bombarded with temptations and trials that could cause any young man to question his faith in God. Many youth come to camp with their childhood innocence stripped away. Their hearts are scarred from years of abuse. Their minds are polluted by ungodly thoughts that tell them they are worthless. Although their training at camp teaches them Christian ways, upon returning home, the peer pressures at school coupled with the lack of guidance at home and in their community, become once again a breeding ground for sin and the recipe for disaster. It is precisely here that the Spirit-filled life is needed. And it is precisely here that the Ron Burton Training Village has the answer.

In the next four chapters, I will show how The Ron Burton Training Village prepares teens to live this Spirit-filled life by:

- (Chapter 2) Describing the Biblical virtues of love, peace, patience, and humility, and showing how they would produce the Spirit-filled life.
- (Chapter 3) Having trained leadership who are aware of the current Christian scholarship in teen ministries.
- (Chapter 4) Teaching love, peace, patience, and humility by developing a challenging and creative curriculum.
- (Chapter 5) And finally by enhancing continuity between summers through follow-up meetings, church placements, and having the kids keep a journal throughout the year, where they explain the ways they applied the four virtues as a way of staying connected to RBTV.

When troubled teens cry, “Help, Can Anyone Hear Me?” RBTV has said, “Yes.” And they begin with the biblical principles of love, peace, patience, and humility. It is to these principles we now turn our attention. These four virtues will show us the possibility of a Spirit-filled life for teens returning home from the Ron Burton Training Village. Chapter two explores what the Bible has to say about love, peace, patience and humility, and how these four virtues are affecting our campers lives. The Scriptures in chapter two are the verses our

campers are required to read and memorize throughout the summer.

Many of these Bible verses are the same ones Ron Burton grew up studying and applying to his life. At RBTV we begin our day with a seven-mile run. In keeping with that theme, having completed mile one come with us as we enter mile two.

CHAPTER TWO:

MILE 2: LOVE, PEACE, PATIENCE, HUMILITY: CHRISTIAN VIRTUES OF A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:7-8, 10-11)

The purpose of the Ron Burton Training Village is to develop spiritual, physical, and mental growth in the campers. RBTV is built on love. Our message is love, and the methods we use to reach young people are based on love. We want love to permeate the campsite. Our logo reads: *Love, Peace, Patience and Humility*. It's written on every item of clothing we hand out to the campers. Above the door in the dining hall the sign reads, "*Love One Another.*"

Before Ron put up one building, planted a single bush, or handed scholarships out to campers, he knew that love would be the primary focus of the camp. "To get these kids to understand what it really means to love one another is my number one agenda," Ron said. He added, "Big guys if you are ever able to capture what I am saying no one will be able to stop you." Love, peace, patience, and humility are an important part of a Spirit-filled life. And they are the four pillars of the

camp. Every time a camper puts on his RBTV sweat suit, t-shirt, and shorts, he is reminded of these four virtues. The more campers see and think about love, peace, patience, and humility, the better chance they have of applying these to everyday life.

At RBTV we take young men ages 11-18 and work with them all summer. We prefer campers come to us at an early age so that we have many years to instill in them these four biblical principles. Ron always told the boys that life is not a joke. Their life is special. They have a destiny to fulfill. “You only get one walk through the garden,” Ron would always say, “but if you do it right one walk is enough.” The garden, of course, represents their life.

Our campers know that life is not always going to be easy or fair, but it can be beautiful and peaceful when Christ is in control. The younger a camper is when he first starts the program, the better chance we have of helping him avoid the pitfalls of life:

Research indicates that over 80 percent of America’s young people under the age of 18 commit at least one offense for which they could be arrested. But only 3 percent of them are. It’s not too far from the truth to say, the difference between a juvenile delinquent and a good kid is that one was unlucky enough to get caught. About 14 percent of the U.S. population is between 10

and 18 years of age, and, according to records, juveniles make up 21 percent of all arrests.⁷

GALATIANS 5- THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Many of the young people we work with know they are heading down the wrong path. The personal stories the campers share with us and with one another are heart wrenching. They are looking for guidance and many of them find it at RBTV. Our camp provides a safe haven for them to experience the peace and love of God. This adventure they embark on for the summer begins a transformation in their very being because the teaching of RBTV is steeped in Scripture, God's Word. We encourage them to walk by the Spirit:

But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. (Gal.5:16, 22)

The Spirit-filled life is a spiritual battle and therefore must be handled spiritually. The Bible says there is a battle going on between the flesh and the Spirit. *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"* (Gal. 5:17). The flesh and the Spirit are completely contrary to one another and each desires to rule over us. When we have surrendered ourselves to Christ,

⁷ Spotts, & Veerman, *Reaching out To Troubled Youth*. 10.

the Holy Spirit comes to live on the inside of us. And while our flesh still lusts after the things of the world, the Apostle Paul says the Spirit gives us the discipline and power to say no.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are; immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outburst of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

In some form or another all RBTV campers battle with at least one of these sins on a daily basis. In the book of Galatians the Apostle Paul says all we have to do to live the Spirit- filled life is to allow the Holy Spirit to govern our lives. We do that by simply relying, abiding, and resting in the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is in charge, our lives will change.

One way we encourage campers to let the Holy Spirit have charge of their lives is through *Quiet Times*. In fact, *Quiet Times* is a major part of the campers' daily schedule. It is during this time they have the opportunity to sit alone in one of the gardens throughout the village and reflect on the fruit of the Spirit. Quiet time takes place right after a message has been preached. After, the campers are sent outside to reflect, meditate, and pray over a specific Bible verse we have been studying. Often the boys will be asked to study a parable together that

deals with the virtue of love, and then they are asked to think about how they can apply this lesson throughout the day. They get excited when they are able to exhibit love in a given situation where they would have typically flown off the handle. I explain to them there is an overwhelming sense of joy and peace when the Holy Spirit is in control. To rest in the Spirit means to entrust ourselves into God's care, to live a godly life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Relying on the Spirit means spending quality time alone with God in prayer, asking the Lord for strength to overcome weaknesses. Without the continuing, directing work of the Holy Spirit our liberty is bound to degenerate into sin. And as Paul warns us in Galatians 5, *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love"* (Gal 5:13).

God did not intend for us to live the Spirit-filled life apart from Him. In fact, it is impossible to live the Spirit-filled life without the Holy Spirit. *"I am the vine, you are the branches, he who remains (meno-in a given place, abide or continue) in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing... If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you"* (John 15: 5, 7). The only way we can please God and

live a life that is fruitful is to be empowered, strengthened and governed by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, all credit and glory belong to the One who empowers us to live a life that is Spirit-filled. *“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:8).*

Now the Holy Spirit lives on the inside of every believer who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He is the Helper, Jesus promised to His disciples and to every believer. *“And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).* The Holy Spirit is God and therefore has the power to make us live the way God intended us to live. I hear a number of campers tell me they are trying to control their tempers, but when things don’t go their way, or some one irritates them, they lose their cool. The problem is that many campers are trying to control their tempers by their own power and strength, rather than relying on the Holy Spirit. They are “trying” instead of “relying.” We teach them that self control is a fruit of the Spirit. Along with self control comes patience, which is one of the four

virtues we stress at camp. So the next time a camper loses his temper he now has the opportunity to put into practice the virtue of patience.

Our human efforts fail us because we are using fleshly methods, which can only produce a fleshly response. Many people are miserable in their faith walk because they are not depending on the Holy Spirit to direct their paths. Without the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit our journey will be a constant struggle. Yet, when the Holy Spirit is in control, life takes on a whole new meaning. Joy in the Christian walk is our experience when the Spirit takes over. What RBTV campers must learn is to use spiritual methods to produce a heavenly response. Alone time with God in prayer, meditation, and even fasting are critical in order to live a Spirit-filled life. Therefore, at RBTV we start our mornings with quiet time and end our days in a group Bible study. We want our campers to be able to quote particular passages of Scripture that will help them overcome their problems. Truly, *love, peace, patience*, and *humility* will help lead people to a Spirit-filled life. Our camp is built on these four Christians virtues. Although these virtues include only three of the fruit of the spirit plus humility, they are the foundation upon which RBTV is built. These are the four values my father found most helpful in his life and wanted to share with the kids

who attend the camp. Although we do not focus on all of the fruit of the Spirit individually, the essence of Galatians 5:22 is taught within our weekly lessons. We now turn to explore each virtue in its biblical context. The Scriptures we will study are the same verses the camper's study during their stay at RBTV.

LOVE

The thing I love about RBTV is the love that all the campers have for one another. I've never been to a place like this before. This is a place where everybody loves you.

Jarrold Burton/RBTV camper

It's a place of love. You know when I came here the whole theme seems to be love another.

Anthony Black/RBTV camper

Love is by far the greatest fruit of all the Spirit. God gave us His gift of love when He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins. Fortunately, Christ's love for us is not based upon our good behavior. "*But God demonstrates His love toward us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*" (Rom. 3:8). Love is critical in the life of every believer.

Jim Burns states, "Young people today need to know that they are loved unconditionally. We must love our people with the 'Jesus style' of

love. He loved unconditionally, with no strings attached. Kids today need to be loved even when they don't produce or don't look good or aren't successful."⁸ Love actually encompasses all the other fruit of the Spirit. I Corinthians 13 gives the best description of what love is all about. And in order for the campers at RBTV to display love toward one another they first have to understand its meaning:

If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (I Cor.13:1)

A noisy gong or clanging cymbal that is not in harmony with the orchestra can make an audience cringe. The image the Apostle Paul is painting here is one of prideful cacophony rather than majestic music. I've never met anyone who likes the sound of a noisy gong. It's loud, intrusive, and disturbing. It makes no difference what I say if my words are not accompanied by the love of God. My sounds are in vain, nothing more than meaningless noise.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I have gained nothing. (v.2)

Here Paul once again states the importance of love. Paul says even if a person gives away all he has to the poor, if it is not done out of love, his philanthropic endeavor has no eternal value. This statement is tough for

⁸ Burns, 37.

the young men at RBTV to understand. How can a person give to the poor and it be of no benefit just because love is missing? Motive is the underlining theme here in these three verses. If a person's heart is not right, his kind acts are just what they are, acts. Say for example, if I got down on my knees and proposed to a woman I had just met. If I proposed only to impress her with a fancy 18 karat diamond ring, most likely she would reject it. If we don't know each other, and she would probably think I was a lunatic. Most importantly, she would reject my gift because we are not in love with each other. She would laugh at my proposal and consider my act a sham. Although we are talking about two separate types of love, the concept is the same. If my motive is not pure, my actions are null and void. The same is true when it comes to sacrifice. If I give my body over to hardship and suffering so I can boast of my accomplishments, my efforts are in vain. I might as well be sitting back doing nothing. Love has to be the motive behind every act of service. Love is the center of Christianity.

No quantity of rhetorical speaking skills or spiritual expressions, even of deep mysteries and divine revelations, or spectacular philanthropy or heroic acts of bodily deprivation, hardship, and expenditure of life, as good as these things may be, have any value before God unless Christian love is their motivation.⁹

⁹ Alan Johnson, *1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove Illinois: Intervarsity Press 2004), 246.

Whatever we do or say, we must first ask ourselves, is God behind this particular act of service or is this about me? We must make sure God is at the center of our service and then we will know our love is sincere.

Love is first and foremost patient. The Greek word *makrothyme* literally means “far from wrath and anger.” It means long suffering, a continuous act or behavior. Love is expressed in patience when we are not quick to rebuke people because they upset us. Love gives us the patience to deal with one another in a loving manner even when another has done us wrong. Love waits patiently for others even though they may be slowing us down, or tempting us to lose our temper. Love is displayed by patience at RBTV when we are running the relay races. At times the competition can get a bit heated when a team is winning, but then a fast sprinter hands the baton off to a much slower runner who drops the baton and it costs the race. The reaction from the young men is to get frustrated and shout out negative comments to their teammate. Here is where patience comes into play. Instead of expressing disappointment and frustration, the campers are taught to offer words of encouragement so the next time around the person feels comfortable, and has the support of the team. Love expressed in patience can quell

any fight brewing amongst the boys and ease any tensions amongst the staff. Clearly, patience cannot exist without God's love.

Love is also kind. *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).* Like patience, kindness is a natural partner of love. Kindness is expressed when we constantly seek the good in others even when it is extremely hard to find. At RBTV we teach the campers that if someone is mean or says something cruel to them, they should respond with a kind word. These campers are hurting all over. They experience pain, loss, and rejection on so many levels that it often causes them to be cruel. God desires us to love those who are cruel by showing acts of kindness. *“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27-28).*

Love is a fruit of the Spirit. God knows it will take His power to allow us to be kind to those who mistreat us. We are to be kind and merciful to others because God has done the same for us. All we have to do is reflect on some of the horrible things we have done in our own lives. Despite our rebellious acts, God still responded to us in love. *“But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in*

return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35).

“Kindness can break the cycles of passion, resentment, anger, violence, and vengeful retaliation.”¹⁰ Our acts of kindness can go a long way.

Paul continues in I Corinthians 13, “*Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and is not arrogant” (v.4).* Jealousy and envy may seem identical but there is a distinction. Envy always involves self advancement and despises the accomplishment of others. Jealousy is always about lusting over what someone else has. When a person is jealous or envious he is never thankful or grateful for what God has given he. Jealous people are never content. They always want more of what someone else has and will do anything to get it. A jealous person is very hard to be around.

Love does not brag and is not arrogant. A person who brags only thinks about himself and his abilities. If a person is quick to brag about himself, it really shows his insecurity. When we puff ourselves up to others, it’s because we really feel small inside ourselves. An arrogant person thinks too much of herself. He is constantly puffing herself up

¹⁰ Johnson, 248.

and loves the attention of others. Both these negative traits are destructive and lead to a person's downfall.

“Love is not rude or unbecoming” (v.5). The Greek word *aschemone*, literally means to act ill mannered.¹¹ This word also has sexual connotations. Love does not behave indecently. Love is very sensitive to others and does not act in ways that are inappropriate. At RBTV we teach the campers to respect women and to act in an appropriate fashion toward them. At RBTV Ron was always big on expressions like, “yes sir, no sir; yes miss and no miss.” Courteous, moral behavior can keep any man out of a lot of trouble!

“Love is not self-seeking” (v.5). A self-seeking person does not care about someone else's feelings. He is self-centered and refuses to see what is best for someone else or the team. A self-seeking person is inconsiderate and displays the opposite of Christian love. Love always puts the interest of others in front of his own. One of the problems we have at RBTV occurs at mealtime. People always want to be the first in line. Campers will cut, cheat, and deceive just to get ahead of someone else. We have a theme at the camp called “Me 3rd.” It reads: God first, others second, and me third. We teach campers they no longer have to

¹¹ Johnson, 249.

be the first. They no longer have to push and shove one another because there is plenty of food for everyone.

“Love is not easily angered” (v.5). This means that love is not provoked to anger by resentment of others talents and gifts. There are so many talented young people at RBTV that we try to give them all the opportunities they need to express their gifts. We have a choir at RBTV, but not everyone can have a solo during our annual concert. Sometimes this can be a source of tension in the group. We try to rotate the placements every year so everyone will get a chance to sing or play; nevertheless, we share with them to encourage one another not to become resentful if they get overlooked.

“It keeps no records of wrongs” (v5). Love does not keep score and neither do we at RBTV. Rome was not built in a day and neither will these kids change over night. Sometimes it takes years for a young person to grow and mature into the person God has called him to be. There is no punishment to fit the crime at RBTV. We give the campers an endless supply of chances to get better. Only if a camper has proven to be a detriment to others or the camp do we discipline him or send him home. If God is all about forgiveness so must be the leaders and staff at RBTV. We correct the campers and share with them how they can be

better, but we hold no marks against them. The kids realize they are loved and forgiven, and therefore feel comfortable enough to receive correction when they do wrong because they understand we are trying to help them succeed.

*“Loves does not delight in evil” (v.6). The Greek word *adikia* literally means unrighteousness, injustice, or harm.¹² It pains me to see a camper do wrong and then act cavalier about it. Taking pleasure in an evil act is something that is not tolerated at RBTV. “*Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*” (Rom. 12:9, 21). We teach them that Christian conduct is an example for others to follow. People watch what we do and they listen to what we say. At RBTV the campers are not allowed to tease each other or say or do anything that is unkind. We are in the business of building people up rather than tearing them down. Only positive and uplifting words can be spoken. “*Rejoice always; pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil*” (I Thess. 5:16-22).*

¹² Johnson, 251.

Now that the Apostle Paul has made it clear what love does not do, he presents the positive aspects of love. Paul says, “*love rejoices with the truth*” (v.6). Love is an action that actually celebrates the truth. The Greek word *synchairei* literally means rejoices together, applauds, or joyfully celebrates the truth.¹³ People who love actually take great joy in the Gospel message. At the village there is an amazing amount of joy when young men work together as a team and display Christian love. The campers spend five weeks together training, praying, and sharing with one another. They want to see each other succeed and overcome the trials in their lives. Throughout the school year they encourage one another to remember the Scriptures and the truths they have learned at camp. They also encourage one another on the athletic field. At the end of the treacherous seven-miles run, all of the campers are absolutely dead tired. Sweat is pouring down their faces. Their gray sweat suits look like they have been drenched with a water hose. After the run they are allowed to go in and shower, but many of the boys decide to stay out and cheer on their brothers. The last part of the run is a straight one hundred yard stretch of pavement. Here many great photo finishes are caught on tape.

¹³ Johnson, 252.



(Campers persevere through the seven miles)



(Campers sprint to the finish line)

The campers line both sides of the track and cheer on their fellow runner as he crosses the finish line. In so many ways the seven-mile run is a metaphor for life. Along the run there are peaks and valleys. There are rocks and small roots to trip up the runner. But when he comes to the final 100 yards, nothing is going to stand in his way. And to see their fellow campers jumping and screaming, waving them in at the finish line is encouraging. They could have gone inside to change clothes, but instead they chose to remain outside and be an encouragement for those campers fighting to finish the race. The writer of Hebrews sums up this image nicely.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Heb 12:1)

They believe in each other and in the gifts God has bestowed upon them. So whether they are on the playing field or back in their communities, love is exceedingly glad when the truth of a matter prevails.



(Campers carefully jog down a rocky hill)

“Love always protects” (v.7). Love always bears all things or covers all things. Love is not about exposing one another’s sins and faults, but supporting the person who has fallen. It’s not a matter of condoning the sin, but helping the person through the sin without chastising him in public. There needs to be a strong sense of perseverance for the one who has messed up. The Apostle James says it best.

My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sin. (James 5:19-20)

“Loves always trusts” (v7). The dinning hall ceiling is about 25 feet high. Once during a sermon, I was talking to the young men about having faith and trusting in God. I set up three different ladders in the room. One was a small stepladder. Another was about 7 feet high and the third about 12 feet high. On each ladder I put a sign with the words “trust,” “much trust” and “great trust”. And I asked three volunteers to climb to the top of the ladders blind folded. When they reached the top, I spoke about five minutes about the meaning of trust and faith. At the end of the lesson, I asked all three if they trusted me and the truths I was sharing with them. All three said they trusted wholeheartedly. Then I told them if they really trust me to climb to the top step on the ladder, fold there arms together, and fall straight back into my arms. I promised I would catch them. The first volunteer on the stepladder of “trust” had no problem falling back. I caught him and everything was fine. The second volunteer on the 12-foot ladder which read “much trust” refused to fall back. He said he was too frightened. But the third volunteer on the “great trust” ladder shouted, “When I fall Paul, I trust you will catch me.” He then let himself go and slowly fell back with a smile on his face. I immediately caught him and placed him on the floor softly. He displayed great faith and trust in me whom he could not see, but trusted

I would be there to catch him as he fell. When Paul says love always trusts, he means love always hopes even in the most trying circumstances. Love never loses faith even though everything seems bleak. Often times in life we cannot see what God has in store for us. We cannot see our way through, but if we simply trust God and rely on his provision, He will make sure we don't come crashing down. It's all about trusting in His Word. This is authentic Christian love. "*It's the real thing*". Alan Johnson has captured the essence of this love:

The picture we see emerging is that authentic Christian love represents the power of the new age stamping us with the life of heaven that has come into our world preeminently in the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, together with the Holy Spirit's mission. Christian love is God's love as it is embodied in the story of Jesus and the Spirit. This love shows itself in habitual acts of concern, caring and respect for the welfare of others, causing us to identify with the other by making their interest our own interests.¹⁴

"Love never fails" (v.8). Love never ends and it will never fail.

Love has and will continue to stand the test of time and eternity. God's love is perfect. Love is what gives the kids at RBTV excitement to face the day. So how do the campers at RBTV put love into practice in their own lives? It is life-long journey. The Christian faith is full of different

¹⁴ Johnson, *I Corinthians* 247.

events that God uses to shape our lives. The young men that attend RBTV realize, sometimes not until long after they have graduated from our program, how much of a benefit it was to them. The values we instill in these kids will have a lot to do with how the campers end up in manhood. It begins when we are children and continues through manhood.

Every RBTV camper is required to read and memorize 1 Corinthians 13. But quoting it is not enough. The Lord desires for all His children to spread God's love every day of our lives. It is not enough to be hearers of the Word; we must be doers of the Word. And the Bible is full of passages that share with us how we should be faithful in bearing the fruit of love. God knows our hearts and He clearly sees who has the love of Christ abiding in them and who does not. We may be able to fool another for a time, but we cannot trick God. If we harbor bitterness and wrath in our hearts, He knows our love is not for real. In Romans 12:9, Paul says our love must be sincere. We can't just pretend to walk by the Spirit. Eventually our true colors will show. And there are a lot of "wanna be fruit bearers" in the world, who say they have Christ in their lives but there is no genuine fruit to prove it. If people say they are Christians but do not have love then they are hypocrites.

“Love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good” (Rom12:9). The Bible says if we do not love another then our relationship with God is fake and we are living a lie. *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1Jn 4:7-8).* It’s clear. We cannot say we have a relationship with the Lord and not have His love in our hearts. The two go hand-in-hand. God is love. And if Christ is truly in our hearts, God has given us His Holy Spirit, which automatically places His love in us. And it is in our confession of faith that we can rest assured that God’s love in us will always remain:

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have come to know and have believed the love, which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him. (1Jn4:13-16)

Notice that John uses the word “abide” five times in these four verses. It is the Spirit’s job to express the love of God in us. All we have to do as God’s children is rest in the Spirit. I explain to the campers that it’s not our responsibility to force ourselves to love one another. When we are

willing to abide in Christ, the Spirit takes over and does the work for us. Remember 1 John says God is love, so when we abide in Him we are automatically abiding in love. God's love is continuous and so it should be continuously manifested in us. The writer of Hebrews says we are to love our brothers in Christ even if we do not know them. *"Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it"* (Heb 13:1).

Ron Burton reminded the campers, "it's easy to love those who love us back", but at RBTV we must also learn to love those who treat us unkindly. Trying to teach a 13-year-old boy this fundamental principle of the Christian faith is difficult to say the least. Luke 6:27-38 is another passage of Scripture all of the campers are required to memorize. *"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you"* (Luk. 6:27) This passage is probably the most difficult passage for kids to understand, accept, and live out. For most of their lives they have been taught revenge is normal and right thing to do. If someone is cruel to them they ought to retaliate in the same manner. If someone punches them in the face, they should strike back. If someone

steals something from them, they better steal it back. Getting even is ingrained in their culture. Jesus knows this, which is why He instituted a new commandment for His followers: love one another. When we love our enemies we are definitely going against the grain of society. Jesus was introducing a new way of thinking and a new way of living, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn. 13:34)*. For many of our campers, Boston is a rough place to grow up. And yet Jesus still wants us to love our neighbors and our enemies no matter how cruel they are in return. The only way a person can love in this way is through the Divine power of the Holy Spirit. All we need to do is abide in Christ. Rest in Christ. Remain in Christ. The Apostle Paul says we do the abiding; Christ does the living. *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20)*.

There is great power that comes from the Spirit of God living inside of us. When a person is walking according to the Spirit he develops a power that is not of this world. He is now able to put to death his old way of living. *“Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a*

new creature, the old things passed away, behold new things have come” (2Cor. 5:17). So when a camper is punched in the face, he no longer has to strike back in anger; he can respond in love. This is not an easy way to live but whoever says living the Christian life was easy has never truly lived it.

Having the freedom and ability to love everyone is an incredible way to live. We can change the world around us just by being an example of Christ’s love. That is why love is the first pillar of the camp. Teaching the campers how to love is the number one priority. Everyday they have to make the decision whether to live by the Spirit or the flesh. Actions will determine which decision they have made. They understand the better choice. But unfortunately, many of our campers have a lot of anger management issues. They are bitter toward their parents, angry at one another, and frustrated with life in general. Many of them use harsh language and swear at will. They tease and put each other down because of their own disappointments and insecurities. The good news is that the kids who return to the village year-after-year truly want to change and break these destructive habits. The Apostle Paul says we have a choice everyday of how we will live our lives. When we

walk according to the Spirit we give glory to God. When we choose to step out of His will, we disappoint Him and grieve the Holy Spirit.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph 4:30-32)

RBTV campers are constantly trying to deal with the flaws in their character. Cursing is a major hurdle for them to overcome. So often, they get angry at each other and they curse. Many see nothing wrong with swearing. In other instances the swearing, shouting, and name-calling can lead to a scuffle. What Paul is teaching in Ephesians, is that when we live by the Spirit, God gives us a heart to forgive and a desire to show love toward each other, instead of revenge. The short fuses we once carried burn a lot longer, and patience is formed. But living according to the Spirit is an everyday decision. Each Christian must decide whom he wants to govern his life. When we wake up in the morning and roll out of bed, is God in control or the flesh? Is our mind centered on Christ or the things of this world? Are we walking according to the Holy Spirit or ways of our sinful nature? Whoever is in control makes the decision. In Romans Paul exhorts everyone to clothe himself with Christ in order to live victoriously. *“Let us behave properly*

as in the day, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh in regards to its lusts” (Rom. 13:13-14). Before the day begins, RBTV campers pray, “Lord allow me to clothe myself with Your Spirit. And enable me to walk in a manner that brings glory and honor to your holy name.” This prayer is not a mind over matter trick or the power of positive thinking. In reality RBTV campers are in a war. They are in the fight of their lives. Satan will use any and all weapons to make sure they fail. The battle is between the Spirit and the flesh.



(Campers look at themselves in a cross made of glass)

Before campers lace up their shoes and step out the door, they must learn and understand the war they are fighting can only be won on their knees in prayer. The battle is not ours to fight but the Lord's. In fact, the only way anyone can overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil is through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus to truly love, one

must live the Spirit-filled life. Our love must be sincere and come from God. RBTV campers live in a world where many are tempted to stray away from the Word of God and follow worldly ways. One bad choice can lead to a lifetime of trouble. Pop culture has opened and revealed the hidden secrets of a postmodern world. We at RBTV need to learn each new summer to be more patient and less judgmental. *“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (Col. 3:14).* Campers have to understand when they return to their communities not everyone will buy into their new image. They will be tested and tried to almost no end. These temptations and trials can cause them to forget about the biblical principles taught at RBTV. Nevertheless, they also know that whoever is willing to put on love, peace, patience and humility, will be able to overcome the trial. They may not win every battle, but they will win the war. A pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith do not make us sinless. At some point all of us fall short and sin against God. But when the campers truly apply the biblical principles to their everyday lives, the probability of failure becomes less. Love is the greatest and most powerful of all the virtues. If the campers have love, then peace, patience, and humility will follow close behind.

PEACE

We don't get this (camp) everyday; especially where I live in the city. We're getting to see the woods and everything is nice and calm and peaceful.

John Rodriquez/RBTV camper

I am more peaceful now. I think a lot now. Before I just used to do whatever and whatever my consequences would just be my consequences.

Mike Warren/RBTV camper

The fruit of the Spirit is also peace. God wants His children to experience peace. Seventeen year-old Mike Warren has been attending RBTV for seven years. He recently told me that if he did not return to RBTV every summer, he would definitely be running with the wrong crowd and getting caught up in a life of sin. "Ron Burton showed me a different way," Mike said. And that different way even includes an occasional fish leaping from Lake Waite and then quickly descending back into the deep.



(A stone bench over looking the lake at RBTV)

To this “Camelot-like” setting one hundred young men leave from their hometowns and cities to take part in a journey that will impact the rest of their lives.

For many youth the camp is the place they first experience the peace and love of God. At RBTV, the boys are far away from their every day urban life. Now only streams, trees, and gardens surround them. However, it takes more than just a beautiful setting to have peace. Consequently, we can be in a peaceful setting and still not have peace. Being peaceful is an attitude. Experiencing peace is a decision every camper has to make. For many youth, RBTV is their first taste of a lifestyle that is grounded in faith, moral values, and peace. At RBTV we promote peace. “We try to display calmness over the village,” Ron Burton Sr. says. “We want peace and kindness to flow like you have never seen them before.” At RBTV everyday is worth a lifetime. One of the rules at RBTV is that the kids are not allowed to tease or swear at one another. We want them to be an encouragement to one another. They are not allowed to put each other down. Our goal is to build them up and give them the confidence to know they are special in the eyes of God. In order to accomplish this goal, we encourage campers to pursue peace and make it a part of their lives. They have to watch what they

say to one another. *“Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (Ps.34:13-14).* Our tongues can be both a blessing and a weapon. Only positive and uplifting words can be spoken at RBTV, a rule that creates an atmosphere of peace. It is the love of God and His awesome peace that transform the campers.

Peace is something that comes from Christ and indwells the child of God. When the Spirit of Christ becomes a part of a young person’s life, a change within them will take place and that change will impact the world around him. *“Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another” (Mk. 9:50).* One goal at RBTV is to make sure when the campers leave the village they are prepared to go back to their communities and promote the peace of God. RBTV kids are the future generation. They are the next world leaders. If the peace of God does not fill that void in their hearts now, the crime, hate, and murder in the world may. These young people are hurting today; instead of having peace in their hearts, they are bitter, angry, and malicious. They have no idea how to be peaceful with one another because they have never truly been taught how to treat one another. At RBTV, campers are taught never to lose sight of their calling. *“As a prisoner for the Lord,*

then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received”
(Eph. 4:1). They are truly the salt of the earth and in order for them to make a difference in their community they need to walk in love and peace even though their peers may not. As followers of Christ, they are called to a much higher standard of living.

When Jesus was getting ready to leave His disciples, about to be crucified He told his followers that His peace would be with them no matter what come their way. *“A time is coming, and has already come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world”*

(Jn.16:32-33). During the last week of camp, each camper knows he has to return to his community. But they do not go back the way they came. They can now go back with the peace of Christ in their hearts. My last message to them is that although we may not always be together, they can have genuine peace through their union with Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has already overcome the world by rising from the grave. He conquered death and beat Satan. Although campers will be scattered to their own homes, they can rest assure that they are not

alone because the Lord is with them every step of the way. If the campers remember that the ultimate victory has already been won, they can claim the peace of Christ in the most troublesome times. Jesus wants all of us to have peace and that peace can only be found in Him who has overcome the world.

Ron Burton's desire was that these boys, before returning home, would realize that at RBTV they had been given a visual experience of the peace of God.



(The Parthenon garden is one of the seven main gardens at RBTV)

The village is in a beautiful, placid setting, full of gardens and streams. These kids truly see and experience peace both physically and spiritually. As soon as they enter the RBTV gates, they are immediately

drawn into a new world, which will hopefully one day lead them to a new life in Christ. When they experience this peace, their souls are at ease. They can relax and sing praises to God and not worry about who is watching or listening to them. They can hang out with each other and embrace one another in Christian love. For five weeks during the year this is their peace. Experiencing the peace of Christ is like sitting down in the rose garden or relaxing down by the lake with a best friend.



(The Rose Garden at RBTv)

They bond with one another and enjoy sweet fellowship. They feel safe, secure and rested.

Like most great summer vacations, the time goes by fast. Soon everyone must return home, back to the chaos and hurt. Obviously, life back home is not always easy. It is not a picnic at the lake. And the RBTv campers know this. They also now know that during the troublesome times in their lives they can remember what God allowed them to experience. They know when the storms of life rage, they need

to get down on their knees and ask the Lord for peace. And the same peace they experienced at camp when all was at rest, they can experience even in their darkest hour. Peace does not always mean the absence of conflict. Jesus promises that his peace becomes apparent in the very middle of trouble. When the campers have the peace of Christ in their hearts, they can take courage, because Christ has overcome the world. *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (Jn. 14:27).* They can bring all of their problems and concerns to God in prayer. However, they know just because they pray not everything is going to be resolved over night. They know overcoming adversity often takes time and requires patience. Nevertheless, they realize Jesus’ soul was troubled for them. *“Now My heart is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour” (Jn. 12:27).* Therefore, their hearts need not be troubled. *“Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me” (Jn. 14:1).*

God promises His children peace. In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul wants his listeners to know that God promises all of his children peace. *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and*

peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom15:13). There is nothing like being filled with the peace of God. His peace can take a broken-hearted soul and mend it back together. No matter how dreary the situation may look, a person can still have peace in knowing that God did not jump ship. He is walking with us every step of the way. When we are filled with the peace of God, the Apostle Paul says we also have hope.

Where many RBTV campers come from there is little or no hope or peace. When they hear, some for the first time, they can have peace through Jesus Christ, a great sense of hope comes over them. The peace that God gives us comes when we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that indwells peace in us. After they were brutally beaten and then thrown in prison for preaching the Gospel, Paul and Silas at Philippi experienced the peace of God. They began to pray and sing praises to God. Picture the scene in Acts 16: 23-34. After being beaten and thrown into prison for doing the Lord’s work, Paul and Silas did not quiver or wallow in their misery. They did not complain and grow angry with God. Instead they began to pray and sing. Moments later the prison doors flew open and everyone’s chains came unfastened. An experience like that would change lives. When the jailor, who was

supposed to be watching them, discovered what had happened, he was ready to commit suicide. But Paul shouted to the jail keeper not to harm himself; everyone was still in their proper place. Then the amazing transformation of the jailor took place. God's peace can transform lives. When we seek the peace of God, it will impact our community and the people we choose to spend our time with every day. Paul and Silas must have had great peace in that prison cell. Their peace and obedience to God helped lead the prison guard to Christ.

God's peace is all encompassing. *"And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:7). God's peace is beyond our human understanding. His peace is not of this earth. His peace goes far beyond anything or anyone could even begin to imagine. God's peace also serves as a protection for all who choose to follow Him. In times of trouble, we sense the Lord bringing back to our remembrance His deliverance and protection in times past. Our minds can be consumed with thoughts of God, even in the most perilous times. The peace of God can bring every person to a fearless sense of trust in Him. Like a boy falling from the tallest ladder of trust into his father's arms, so is every person who places His trust in the Lord. In God's caring arms

there is peace and comfort. This trust does not mean all will be well in the world. The campers at RBTV testify that they have many struggles. They have dark days and long, lonely nights. But God's word promises us peace that will bring light to the darkest moments in our lives. It's unexplainable and incomprehensible. King David said it best in Psalm 27. *"Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident"* (Ps.27:3). Even though David is surrounded by those who hate him and want to take his life, he does not fear. David's heart has been filled with the peace of God.

To be able to have confidence and not fear in the face of danger is to have peace. Through Christ peace has come into the world. Our hearts and minds will be guarded in Christ Jesus. Nothing can replace peace of mind and peace of heart. God gives it to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. No one can take God's peace from us, only we can choose to reject it. Peace is critical in the lives of RBTV campers. They need to know and believe that no matter what comes their way God's peace will guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

God desires His peace to spread throughout the world. *"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see*

the Lord” (Heb.12:14). In order for there to be peace on earth it has to begin with each of us presenting himself before God. We must recognize how lost and condemned we are apart from Christ and asked to be made whole. We have to pursue peace. We have to come before the Lord in reverence and with humility. God does not need us, but we desperately need the Savior. And He is waiting on us to respond to His holy call. Imagine the joy and peace we can experience when we allow Christ into our hearts. He stands waiting to spend time in sweet fellowship with Him. He brings with Him an eternity of peace. He is the Prince of peace and He wants us to have peace with one another. We have to be willing to pursue His peace and allow the Holy Spirit to manifest it in our own lives. And in that pursuing we will develop patience.

PATIENCE

Growing up was very tough for us (two brothers). Our mom was an alcoholic and our father was a drug addict. Having parents like that is not the easiest environment to grow up in. I was angry and confused. But coming to RBTV, I learned to develop patience during these difficult times and I learned to forgive them.

Chris Getchell/RBTV camper

Being conformed into the image of Christ is not something that happens over night. It takes time to grow and to develop. Patience is

the third pillar upon which RBTV is built. Patience is one of the greatest virtues and the first word that describe love. In 1 Corinthians 13 says love is patient. The Greek word, *makrothymei*, literally means “far from wrath and anger.” It means a person is not quick to lash out prematurely, but waits for the interest of others.¹⁵ God calls us to be patient with one another. John Stott states, “Patience is longsuffering towards those who aggravate or persecute.”¹⁶ The campers do not need someone to come down hard on them and to judge them. Our campers need love. And that love begins with being able to understanding their backgrounds. Ron Burton knew to build a camp from scratch would require patience and great trust in the Lord. Ron also knew dealing with the campers at RBTV would require great patience. The King James Version describes patience as “long-suffering”. God is patient toward us by the mere fact that He holds back His wrath toward human rebellion. Humans deserve Divine judgment, but because of God’s love for us, we receive forbearance. Once again, Christ is the perfect example of how God wants us to behave toward one another. The Lord is so patient with us, and we should be patient toward one another. In fact, the only way to have peace is to practice patience, which results

¹⁵ Johnson, 248.

¹⁶ John Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press 1968), 148.

from love. Throughout the year our young men face many difficulties. But when they rely on the Spirit of God to give the patience to endure their trial, they can also experience peace. When we are patient and keep our eyes centered on Christ, we will have peace. Thus, we see love, peace, and patience as three pillars that can transform a young person's life. All three are critical in the life of our campers, but the virtues are not always practiced. It is only when our campers seek God's face and turn to His holy Word do we see results. We must learn to pray for the Spirit's power to see these results. Walking with God is a daily process. We must learn to take it one day at a time. The Apostle Paul says, "*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:25). Oftentimes, a simple prayer will help. "Lord, fill me with your patience to help me deal with this problem." The Holy Spirit must be in control in order to achieve the wonderful standard to which God has called us.

Patience is not an emotion like joy. It is a hands-on experience. Patience is a great quality to possess but to obtain it takes time. Usually it's a growing process that most people do not like to experience. To put it another way, in order to have patience you first have to be patient. It usually requires a person to persevere through the trials. "*Consider it*

all joy, my brethren when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jam. 1:2-4).

Most of the campers at RBTV are facing some type of trial right now in their lives. For many, the summertime program is a five-week hiatus from the struggles at home. Recently a camper named Brian Casey called me and told me he finally had to leave his house. The problems he and his father were having every day became too much of a burden on the family. This year he was supposed to be a senior in high school but is now enrolled in a special program at Johnson & Wales University. Brian’s situation is just one of the myriad of issues going on with our youth at RBTV. It is discouraging to hear the problems that are going on inside homes, at schools, and throughout the communities. Many young people are forced to make hard decisions that often lead them into a trial of some kind. Our campers deal with issues including abuse, neglect, peer pressure and abandonment. They are confused, and many are angry about the situation they find themselves in. With tears in their eyes they ask me why God allows them to go through such

difficult situations. I tell them James has the answer to their deep and often painful questions.

James tells us to consider our difficult situations as pure joy. The trials we go through are refining our lives. Our faith is put through the fire when we are forced to make a difficult moral choice. Should I go to that party with my friends where I know there will be drugs and alcohol or should I not? For many RBTV campers, reality is painful and they are looking to take the easy road. God wants them to take the high road and develop their character. We can consider it pure joy, because we know God is up to something in our lives, when we encounter various trials. James says our suffering develops perseverance in us. We become more like Christ when we persevere through the trial and do not lose faith. We become more committed to Christ everyday we persevere. The end result, James says is perfection, not lacking anything. That does not mean we are sinless, but we are mature and complete. Patience does not mean we sit back and do nothing, waiting on God to move mountains. Ironically a camper has to put forth effort while he is developing patience. It's like waking up at 4:30 a.m. and running the seven miles every morning in order to eventually become fit. Sometimes we have to force ourselves to get up, especially when the

legs are sore and the body is tired. There are some mornings when the campers can think of a hundred reasons why they cannot finish the run. Some of the excuses I've heard include: headache, back ache, blisters, sore throat, stomach ache, homesickness, knee sprain, leg pull. You name it, they've claimed it. The greatest excuse I've heard in the past 21 years is when a camper actually told the staff that he sprained his ankle while he was asleep in his bed. He got a pass based on creativity. But they sell themselves short, whenever they don't finish the run and decide to go in early.

James says let perseverance have its perfect work so that we can be made complete. If we give up on ourselves and loose faith, we will never become the person God has called us to be. For example, if a camper decides to cheat on the seven-mile run everyday, he will never be in as good shape as if he had completed the entire course. There is no question that patience is a heroic and critical virtue. God in His infinite wisdom made it so that the only means of getting patience are unpopular and often extremely painful. But so is our seven-mile run every morning!

I was in my room one night and my mom was just drunk out of her mind again. And I was just like, I can't take it anymore. And I remember

praying by my bed. And I was just like God help me! Just come down here and help I am sick of this. And that's when I found RBTV.

Chris Getchell/RBTV camper

In order for the campers to overcome the many trials in their lives they will need patience. Their growth and maturity in the Lord will depend upon their ability to practice patience. Endurance, trust, and faith in the Lord are needed when we encounter trials. Campers like Chris Getchell, who have been abused or hurt by their parents, need to learn to forgive. Forgiveness requires patience. Our campers have to learn to relinquish their anger and be forbearing toward mom and dad. At RBTV we teach them the importance of patience and not to lose hope when the going gets tough. The seven-mile run at 4:30 am is tough; it teaches perseverance. They have to learn to push themselves up the steep hills and to watch out for the loose limbs and jagged roots along the way. The seven miles is a lesson about life. It's not something they can conquer in a week. The seven miles is a struggle. It's painful. After the first week, many campers are ready to give up and go home. They say it's too hard and they would rather be home with their friends playing video games. The campers develop patience by grinding through the five weeks and not giving up on themselves. They get a taste of what patience is by pushing themselves through the program.

Our goal at the end of the five weeks is to show them how to be patient with themselves and with each other. By getting through the five weeks, they allowed perseverance to have its perfect work. They come out more mature than when they started.

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of light. (Col.3:10-12)

In this particular passage, the Apostle Paul is thanking his fellow faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae. Paul's prayer is that they have great endurance and patience, so that their lives may be an example for others to follow. Paul's hope is that their lives bear fruit and bring glory to God in everything they do. Paul wants them to continue to grow in the ways of the Lord and gain strength by relying on His power in order to have great endurance and patience. What is good for the people at Colossae is good for the kids at RBTB. To run the race of faith will require great patience and sacrifice. Paul tells his listeners at Colossae that when they are strengthened by God's power and might they will develop great patience. Heeding the ways of God is a life-long commitment. Every minute, every hour, every day we have a choice to

make. All we have to do is be patient, walk in the ways of God, and one day we will stand in His presence with exceeding great joy.

HUMILITY

The one thing that impressed me about Ron Burton and what stuck with me the most was that he was so humble. I mean he had all of this (camp). He had it all you know great family, great kids lots of fame and he never bragged about anything. He just stayed so humble through it all and that's what sticks with me the most. When I am at work on my job I remember to be humble like Ron Burton was.

Joe Jeffrey/RBTV graduate

Humility is the fourth virtue at the camp. Of all the virtues, humility is the one that probably gets misused the most.

*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you clothe yourself (**egkomboomai-to engirdle oneself**) with humility(**tapeinophrosune-humbleness of mind**) toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (**tapeinos of low degree**). (1 Peter 5:5)*

The great virtue of humility is what causes young men to mature into great men. When the *Boston Herald* printed a full page spread of my dad's life, one of the pictures was him as a professional football player; the other as a humble philanthropist. The headlines read, "*He Was A Patriot. Then He Became A Giant.*" Ron Burton became a giant, because throughout his entire life he remained humble. In fact, the only reason he became a giant and hero to so many people is that he lowered himself in order to serve God and the Boston community. Ron always

had a special place in his heart for young people and it was his humility that caused him to be an effective servant.

During the five weeks, we teach the campers what it means to possess humility. We share with them examples of how to be humble in their daily lives. The Apostle Peter encourages all people, but especially the younger generations to clothe themselves with humility. Peter encourages all of us to put on, as though it were a garment, the Christ-like character of humble service. When Peter says to clothe ourselves with humility, he means for us to put on a badge of servitude. Humility can be seen when Christ washed the disciples' feet. *"So He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him"* (Jn. 13:4). When we clothe ourselves with humility we have an attitude of service. It is an active selfless service toward one another. We should be willing to lower ourselves with a heart of compassion to love and serve each other.¹⁷ Having an attitude of humility is extremely important in God's eyes. The Bible says God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Peter says anyone who is proud does not

¹⁷ Norman Hillyer, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 144.

have God on his side. In fact, God opposes any person who thinks more highly of himself than others. *“He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble” (Luke. 1:51-53).*

If we want to follow the Lord everyday, then we have to be willing to humble ourselves before Him. Christ told His own disciples the only way for them to have genuine peace and pure rest is to have humility. *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you shall find rest for your souls” (Matt:11:29).* Jesus promises to lighten our loads when we humble ourselves before Him. There is divine favor and blessing for those who have humility and desire to follow the ways of God. The very foundation of Christian humility is a dependent attitude toward God and His ability to rescue. A great sense of humility should come over all of us, when we recognize that we cannot save ourselves from our sins. We cannot deliver ourselves from the bondages of sin. When we truly understand what God has delivered us from, we would remain in a constant state of humility. Humility says, “Lord, I can’t. You can. I won’t. You must, so I humble myself before you Lord.”

True greatness comes from being a servant. No one wants to be around people who boast about the possessions they have or the things they do. People desire to be around others who are humble; humility is attractive. Jesus instructed His disciples that the lower they made themselves the higher He would exalt them. This type of thinking is completely contrary to world view. *“The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matt 23:12).* What Jesus was attempting to instill within His disciples was the attitude of a servant: humility and willingness to put others ahead of oneself. At RBTV the kids learn that a true leader places his own needs last, as Jesus exemplified His life and His death. One of the top awards that we give out at the end of camp is the “Most Humble Award”. The award goes to the camper who displays humility throughout all the activities at camp. This particular camper learns not to brag if he scores a touchdown. He is also willing to let others go ahead of him when it’s time to eat.

In God’s eyes greatness comes when we serve others. But humility does not mean inferiority. It means putting others ahead of ourselves and recognizing their needs. Humility is hard to put into practice because we are so accustomed to getting our needs met. For

some campers it is also difficult because they seldom get their needs met at home. Christ came as a humble Servant willing to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. He is the greatest example of humility. God, who has all power and controls all things, is willing to come in the flesh and die for the sins of the world. *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled He did not revile in return; while suffering He uttered no threats but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”* (1 Peter 2:21-23). Christ is the perfect example of how we are to live. Peter says Christ has left us a perfect ***hypogrammos- pattern of patient endurance to which we should conform ourselves.***¹⁸ Humility begins in the mind as we recognize who we really are in God’s eyes; sinful, fallen, lost individuals. Then we see what Christ had to endure when He suffered on the cross for our sins. Now it is up to us to humble ourselves at His feet, and be willing to follow His example and humbly serve one another the way Christ served us.

¹⁸ Hillyer, 89.

Love, peace, patience and humility; it's like a guide to life. If you live it, doors will open for you, that you never would expect.

Ricky Moore/RBTV camper

The four pillars of RBTV appear comfortably in Colossians 3.

The Apostle Paul sums up what we hope all of our campers at RBTV will one day exemplify:

*And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness, and **patience**; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all things put on **love**, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the **peace** of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful. (Col 3:12-14)*

Our goal is to make sure each child understands what it means to be “born again.” Our hope is that each one comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The choice is their own. But we let the campers know that the only way to live out *love, peace, patience and humility* is to become a child of God and be filled with the Spirit. When they develop patience with one another, there is tranquility. When they put on a heart of humility, everyone lifts one another up. When the campers come together in love, there is a great bond of unity. As a result of these three happenings awesome peace permeates throughout the village and everyone can experience it.

Everything we need to live the Spirit-filled life is found in Christ. Our ability at RBTV to display *love, peace, patience and humility* is given to us by Him. He is the Source of our strength, and the only way we can grow in Christian love. Peter writes in his second epistle that Christ's divine power has given us everything we need to live a godly life. God appeals to us on the basis of His love for us. Christ has handed over to believers His magnificent and precious promises so that we can be partakers of His divine nature and gain victory over sin.

“Now for this reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self control, and in your self control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love” (2Pet.1:5-7).

RBTV campers must understand and trust God at His word, so that when it comes time to return to their communities they do not forget the things they were taught during the five weeks. The four qualities of *love, peace, patience and humility* should always be increasing in their lives. When they continue to grow in these virtues they will bear much fruit and have a tremendous effect in their homes, schools, churches, and sports teams. If they choose not to grow in these areas, they will

revert back to their old ways. *“For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you, for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble” (2Pet1:9-10).* The ability to live out the four pillars of the camp even after they leave RBTV is available to them if they choose to accept it. The Spirit of God dwells within them and it is now up to them to develop that relationship.

Although the leaders at RBTV rely on God’s Word for teaching teens, they are also aware of an array of good Christian scholarship dealing with teen ministries. It is to these writings we now turn our attention.

CHAPTER THREE

MILE 3: WE ARE NOT ALONE

What I love about the Ron Burton Training Village is that it's just a place where kids who come from bad places or who have trouble in their life can get away and get a taste of what life could be.

Austin Alfredson/RBTV camper

Many great men and women have helped make the Bible and the Christian walk easier to understand. Notice I did not say easier to live... but understand. The Lord has anointed many people with the gift of teaching to equip the people of God with a better understanding of His Word. Christian scholarship helps the church stay pure in doctrine and effective in ministry. My professors at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, through their teaching and writing, have helped me immeasurably to serve Christ. Many other wonderful books have helped me in my own walk with Christ and in directing the camp. It's important that we recognize these scholars' commitment to the Scriptures and use their teachings to help encourage teens to live the Spirit-filled life. This chapter will offer a review of books I found helpful in dealing with adolescents and the challenges they face. I will begin with five books I felt did not deliver on what they had promised. It is not to say the following books are poorly written, they just did not

provide insight I was looking for in this project. Secondly, I will discuss those books that helped me the most in trying to reach the young people at our camp. Third, I will highlight an interview I had with one of our nation's top youth leaders and share his thoughts on ministering to inner-city kids.

LITERARY REVIEW

In *God at the Mall*, Pete Ward offers interesting insight about today's youth. He calls them "Outside-in or Inside-out" youth. He deals with young people both in the church and outside the Christian community. Pete shares some interesting information about youth culture but offers no new ways for addressing the two different cultures. He does, however, present a five-step model for relational outreach (contact, extended contact, proclamation, nurture, and church). Although there was nothing new about his approaches, the focus on church was interesting.

In his book *Real Teens* George Barna gives a snapshot of today's youth culture. The book is filled with statistics and charts about music, technology, self image, and religious upbringing. This book is great book if a person is looking for a generic overview of today's youth culture. Barna does not suggest ways to change our youth.

Youth Education in the Church editors Roy Zuck and Warren

Benson were the least helpful of all of my readings. In fact, as soon as I began the book, I felt lost and confused about its purpose. The book appears to be a compilation of the views youth leaders from around the country who offer their expertise in youth ministry. Zuck and Benson touch on too many issues surrounding youth ministry. For example, chapter 27 gives a brief summary, description and development of Christian camps throughout history, but fails to tell the readers why they should care. The chapter classifies camps by duration and location but neglects to say why this information is important.

When I began reading Merton Strommen, Karen Jones, and Dave Rahn's *Youth Ministry That Transforms*, I hoped to find new ways to help the kids at RBTV live a transformed Spirit-filled life. I became disenchanted with this book because it only gives an analysis of various issues youth leaders face. The writers focus too much on the youth worker and neglect the youth. In hindsight, I probably should have read the cover more thoroughly and realized this is a resource book for senior pastors and supervisors involved in hiring youth workers. For example, chapter four deals with the training and recruitment of youth leaders and volunteers. The book has very little to do with transforming the lives of

young people, and much to do about finding and training the right types of leaders.

Edward Trimmer's *Youth Ministry Handbook* is too elementary when it comes to working with young people. In chapter three, for example, Trimmer lists sixteen possible goals for youth ministry. There is nothing wrong with the goals, but there is nothing new and exciting about them either. Since the book is called *Youth Ministry Handbook*, I was hoping for important new tips on reaching or counseling young people. Instead, Trimmer gives a simple and brief overview about what youth ministry involves and what programs are available. The book creates several miscellaneous lists: the ten common mistakes in youth ministry, ten topics to explore with teens, youth organizations, evaluation of your youth program, your motivation for youth ministry, etc. Trimmer seems to have a list for everything, but I am not interested in these lists. I want to know how the kids at RBTV can live a Spirit-filled life once they leave our program and return to their communities. A list of authors that can help me accomplish this goal is the list that interests me!

In fact, I found several authors that do give insight into understanding teens and that do make concrete suggestions which can

be applied to our work at RBTv. Among these authors are Dean Borgman, Dwight Spotts, David Veerman, Jim Burns, David Elkind, Eldin Villafane, and Geo Bethune. Instead of reviewing the writings of these authors in the traditional way, at this point, I will incorporate their work into the goals and themes of RBTv.

CREATING A TRUSTING ENVIRONMENT

Camper Austin Alfredson says he loves RBTv because it's a place where kids can get away and get a taste of the glorious Christian life. In order to truly reach the youth at RBTv, our leaders must first create an atmosphere of trust. Genuine trust usually takes time, but God also has His own way of softening the kids' hearts so that often trust can be established quickly. Trust is about building solid relationships where kids feel safe. If the campers cannot relate to the leadership team, trust will never be established. Dean Borgman's work helps us develop healthy relationships with teens. He states "Many young people want to be heard and need to be appreciated. They will open up only to those who have come into their world. They will hear only from those who are present, learn only from those who love them. And the pain they feel!"¹⁹

¹⁹ Dean Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc 1997), 32.

At RBTV the campers have mandatory Bible studies and huddle meetings throughout the week. Both activities have become great venues for creating a sense of trust and friendship. Some of the personal stories that have come out of these group discussions shock me to this day! But the campers will talk in an environment where they feel safe enough to share their problems, and then often will listen to godly advice for solutions to these problems. Some of our kids battle with depression, others face abuse: physical, emotional, and sexual. Many of them are on several different medications at one time. They are angry at the world and disappointed in themselves. Many are overweight. Some have serious self-esteem issues, while others are too high on themselves. A handful still wet their beds at night. They are disgusted with their pasts, and afraid of what their futures may bring. Many of our campers come from broken homes where the father or mother is not present. Some have virtually no relationship with God, and the Bible is like a foreign object to them. Nevertheless, most of the kids that come to RBTV want life to get better. They return every year because they see themselves improving. They are hungry for success and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve it. Ron Burton Sr. says, “All of us want to get better. The question we have to ask ourselves is, ‘What price are we

willing to pay?” I once heard a speaker say, “The difference between mediocrity and greatness is a little extra effort.” I would agree. The kids at RBTv are willing to put forth that extra effort despite the troubles they face. Even though they hurt on the inside, they continue to push on. Here Spotts and Veerman agree with Borgman and give insight into youth at RBTv.

The troubled young person is a complex package of needs. Unlike the average people, he or she has social, physical, mental, and emotional needs which are not being met and which have little hope of being met in the future.²⁰

Our kids have problems, and they are looking for God-honest solutions. At RBTv they have the opportunity to learn about each other and to grow together. I found *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* most helpful, especially when Borgman stated, “Most young people will come to faith and maturity only as they share, grow, and serve in positive and supporting peer groups-as countercultural brands enlightening the darkness of contemporary society.”²¹

People notice a change in the kids that come out of our program because we first accept them for who they are. We take in the neglected, abused, and abandoned children and share with them the love

²⁰ Spotts & Veerman, 116.

²¹ Borgman, 104.

of God. In their book, *Reaching Out to Troubled Youth*, Dwight Spotts and David Veerman say youth leaders have a mission of love to fulfill:

Building relationships starts with accepting troubled youth as they are with all of their problems and difficulties. That is, instead of approaching the person with ideas of how you want to remake or reform him or her, you must come as viewer and receiver, ready to participate with the young person in his or her world. God accepts them, and so must you. God created this person; He loves him and sent Jesus to die for him. He has value and worth to God.²²

The book was profitable to me because so many kids at RBTV need Spotts' and Veerman's kind of understanding. Camper Francisco Varella is the perfect example. He's been beaten down most of his life. He's been incarcerated and abused. He admits the only things he has ever been good at in life are stealing, fighting, and selling drugs. Not all of our campers are in as rough shape as Francisco. Some struggle with school or lack the athletic talent to play a sport well. Whatever their situation, the campers come broken and defeated. But when they enter our gates, we let them know they are special and are loved, no matter what they have been through. We also let the campers know that their lives are about to change for the better. Their journey to becoming a Spirit-filled child of God begins the moment they enter the village. In

²² Spotts & Veerman, 56.

time they will come to know what love, peace, patience, and humility are all about. We let the campers know that God loves them and each one of them has a destiny to fulfill. Each of the young men know his destiny does not unfold over night, or even during the course of five years, but through his entire lifetime.



(Left: Preston Hampton encourages leader David Pedra.)

Every camper has a different story. During the summer they share their stories with one another and with the staff. I found Borgman's *Hear My Story*, most insightful as he explains how understanding a young boy's story takes patience and wisdom:

Teenagers especially need attention. If they are not offered good attention from friends and adults, they will take bad attention from anyone; bad attention seems much better than no attention. Hearing the stories of young people involves caring, taking time, waiting for them to feel confident and for teachable moments, encouraging them to share and to develop their stories.²³

²³ Dean Borgman, *Hear My Story* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc 2003), 13.

Like the seven-mile run in the morning, each camper's life story is a journey. No first year camper comes to RBTV and immediately conquers the seven-mile run. The 4:30 am wake-up chant Ron Jr. sings every morning is painful to the ears. The roads they jog on are not all paved. There are steep hills full of roots, rocks, and dangerous holes. The campers have to be careful where they run.



(7-year camper Rafael Pena strides up rocky hill.)

In time, the campers come to understand that the seven-mile jog not only gets them into shape, but also is a metaphor for life. Like the morning run, their lives have not been easy. Therefore, we take each camper where he is in life and we begin the seven miles together. When they are tired, they stop and walk. When they want to give up and quit, we are right there by their side, encouraging them not to loose hope. All of our staff runs the seven miles. We are in the race together as one family. This unity is one way we build long lasting friendships at camp.

“It’s the journey we do together that makes the run so special,” RBTV leader David Pedra says. “I love finishing the race with a group of guys rather than by myself.” Our staff is determined to make sure the young men do not give up on themselves. Even Preston Hampton, now 74 years old, runs in the seven miles. Soon, our young men begin to believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Although their journey will be long and arduous, God will be with them every step of the way.

In 1999, Ron Burton was diagnosed with bone cancer. But Ron did not allow the cancer to deter him from fulfilling his destiny. With 70% of his bones already infected with cancer, Ron put on a brave face and continued to run every morning with the kids. Ron ran until he was sixty-five years old. Until his frail body gave out. Through it all, my father never complained about the pain. His courage and commitment sparked a flame inside the young men that will burn for a lifetime. The campers saw first hand how one man’s love changed lives. His is a true story of inspiration and love. As the kids grew closer to Ron Burton in his waning years, he taught them to grow closer to Christ. Burns’ book was helpful to me because he shares the excellent insight into teen perception.

Our Christian faith is sealed in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As the ministry of Jesus was incarnate in the Gospels, so our life must be incarnate in youth ministry. If we are ever to have a positive influence on our young people, we must build relationships with them and live out our faith in front of them. Young people tire of phony programs or manipulative methods. They can see through false pretenses. By building genuine relationships with them and allowing them to see healthy staff relationships, young people will consider the adults as friends and confidants.²⁴

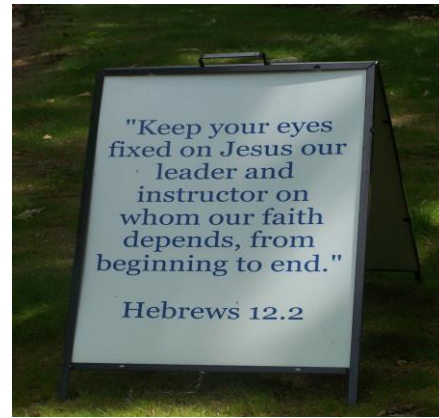
Once the campers feel accepted for who they are, they can begin to run the race God has marked out for them. By the end of the five weeks, our campers are pushing themselves and each other through the seven miles. Watching more than a hundred young men give everything they have to finish their race is thrilling. There is a renewed sense of hope in the hearts and minds of these young men. Many campers say they even pray and ask God to give them strength as they run. Prior to the RBTV experience many campers never prayed about anything. We unite together as one. We become a family of different races from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. They become dedicated young men learning the values of hard work and godly character. Without realizing it, our campers' attitudes change and inadvertently they take themselves to a much higher level, a forward move which affects every aspect of their lives. God becomes real to them and they are excited

²⁴ Burns, 16.

about life. Burns' book confirms the strong need today for positive influence in the lives of young people:



(A peaceful trail in the seven-mile run.)



(Scripture is posted throughout RBTV)

“One of the major goals of any youth ministry is to provide an opportunity to form a healthy, Christ-centered community of peers influencing each other in a positive way.”²⁵ Burns explains camps can be the environment for young people to grow together in Christ:

Camps and retreats are times to focus on building relationships, strengthening friendships, and meeting new acquaintances. The element of building a stronger sense of community and the wonderful feeling of belonging come out of this relational aspect of camping. Getting away from home and church provides the opportunity to simply have more time together. There is time to develop relationships and time to focus on spiritual and personal growth. Camps and retreats seem to be the place young people allow God to speak to them and challenge them to be all they can be.²⁶

²⁵ Burns, 34.

²⁶ Burns, 92.



(Campers enjoy a dip in the pool)



(Campers form life long friendships)



(Campers love to relax and sit together)



(Jake Reagan gets help pushing a tire up hill)

Each one of our campers has important choices to make in life. At RBTV, we try to instill in them the important biblical principles they will need to make right choices. We create an atmosphere inside the village that is safe, challenging, fun, and stimulating. The staff at RBTV is dedicated to touching on all the different aspects of youth ministry. Dr. Dean Borgman in his book *Hear My Story* says there are five important steps to effective youth ministry:

- Attracting young people to a safe place
- Providing young people with caring mentors
- Enabling young people to hear someone else's story
- Empowering young people to tell their own stories and be affirmed

- Sharing the story of God's love²⁷

At RBTV the campers are encouraged to work through these steps. And at RBTV, we touch on all five of Borgman's issues for youth ministry.

The Ron Burton Training Village is a safe and loving environment. The gardens, the people, the mission all help create a "Camelot" setting.

Camper Jarrod Burton said it best. *"I've never been to a place like this before. It's a place you can get away from all the drama and stuff at home. And this is a place where everybody loves you; they care for you, and want to see you do well. And we are all in this together. It's just something you don't get at home."*

RBTV has a staff team committed to helping the young men grow. The entire Burton family serves at the camp. Ron Jr. leads the charge. Along with Ron are his three brothers: Steve, Phil and myself and our sister Elizabeth Scott, who conducts Bible Study and teaches a SAT prep course and geography. Steve's wife, Ginni, runs the camp's swimming program and also helps run the Bible Study. Along with the family, we have an adult support staff who faithfully serves the kids.

During the five weeks all campers get many chances to tell, and listen to one another's stories. Their favorite is Ron Burton's story.

²⁷ Borgman, *Hear My Story* 12.

When I hear the campers' stories and listen to their cries for help, Psalm 119 speaks to their condition. *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy Word"* (Ps. 119:9). The Gospel must become a living force in the hearts and minds of young people in order for them to make it in the world. But to reach them with the Gospel message a relationship must be formed. The kids have to be willing to trust the messenger in order to receive the Message.

Borgman makes it clear.

To be heard, the Word must come into the world of young people. Presence precedes preaching, and listening precedes speaking. A hundred preachers may fail to break through to kids there on the corner. But the street worker who has hung out with them for months may be able to penetrate to the heart of their concerns and gain an audience.²⁸

In order to relate to young people leaders have to be willing to spend time with them. Consequently, everyone learns what it means to love and serve one another. It is our hope that the campers take these virtues back to their own communities. Borgman continues, "We might conclude a definition of youth ministry in terms of empowering young people to become storytellers able to help others and serve the human community."²⁹ The goal at RBTV is for kids to learn the values of love,

²⁸ Dean Borgman, "When Kumbaya Is Not Enough" 19.

²⁹ Borgman, 12

peace, patience, and humility and begin to make an impact in their homes, schools, teams, churches, and communities. The challenge is getting our campers to truly believe and understand that God can use them to make a difference.

Borgman's final step in youth ministry is sharing the story of God's love. Everyday, the campers get to hear the story of God's Redeeming love. As a leader, I have the opportunity to know the campers on a very personal level and share the message of God's love for them. At home the temptations and peer pressures they face on a daily basis make them an easy target for Satan. Unfortunately, I watch many of them fall victim to the pitfalls that plague our cities and local communities. David Elkind laments, "There is little or no place for adolescence in America society today- not in our homes, not in our schools, and not in society at large. We have, in effect, all but eliminated this age period as a distinct stage in the life cycle."³⁰

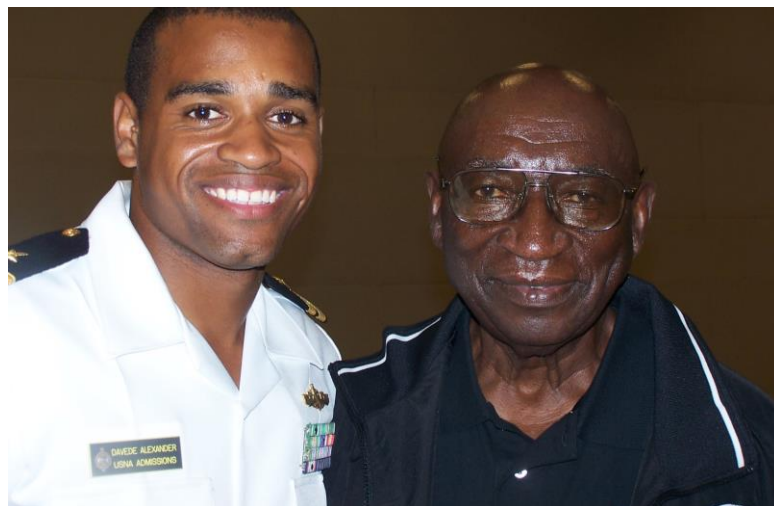
Sometimes the temptations are so strong that our kids forget many of the biblical principles we teach them at RBTV. One bad choice can lead to a lifetime of trouble. My responsibility as youth minister is to ground the campers in God's Word and steer our young

³⁰ David Elkind, 3

men in the right direction. I especially enjoyed Burns' *The Youth Builder*, when he reminded me that, "Your young people are making decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. Adolescence is a time of transition that brings long-lasting effects. As a youth worker, you play a powerful role and influence in the life of your students."³¹



(Rev. Paul Burton addresses the camp.)



(RBTV staff members: Lt. Davede Alexander and Preston Hampton)

³¹ Burns, 15.

OFFERING A PLACE OF HOPE

Where our kids are coming from there is not a lot of hope. So it's very important that we interject and put some type of moral foundation in their lives. Because where they are coming from, sometimes it doesn't make sense to treat each other kindly.

Ron Burton Jr./RBTV director



(Ron Burton Jr. explains the game Capture the Flag to the campers)

My former professor and friend Eldin Villafane says that what many young people are lacking is hope. “There is a world out there, there is a community out there, there are people out there, there are individuals out there-destroyed, despondent, and defeated by hopelessness.”³² The work of both Villafane and Borgman is of immeasurable value to youth ministry.

³² Eldin Villafane, *Seek the Peace of the City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing company 1995), 46.

Professor Dean Borgman says boys need positive role models to share with them biblical values. “Young people often long for mentors who possess moral assurance, who will accept and respect them, and who can point them toward purpose and significance.”³³

When a young person lacks purpose or a sense of belonging, life can become a deep, dark tunnel of despair. It’s a scary feeling to think no one cares whether you live or die. When a young boy is constantly ignored, or put down for the better part of his early years, the emotional damage can be devastating. Some of our young men have no reason to hope, because of the horrifying events that have occurred in their lives. Our kids need to feel and be connected. Our mission is to share the power of Jesus Christ to the powerless and to bring faith to the faithless. In order to accomplish this high calling, we are required to have love, peace, humility, and--what Dr. Villafane describes as--“burning patience.”

Burning patience” is that quality of faith that in any city—be it Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, or Boston—notwithstanding its complexity and confusion, its chaos and crime, its heart cries and challenges, can and must believe that the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ makes a difference. It believes that in the ‘now and not yet’ of the kingdom of God, one can believe in a city where there is comprehension and clarity, care and concern, consolation, justice, and love. In other words, there can be

³³ Borgman, *Hear My Story* 5.

shalom—peace, harmony, and wholeness with justice. The city—Boston—is our city. Armed with a “burning patience” we can bring to it a “measure of grace” from that splendid city for which our hearts yearn.³⁴

In order to create this “burning patience” the Holy Spirit must be in control. If we are ever going to see any significant change in our youth, our leaders must be filled and led by the Spirit of God. Imagine a city, a country, a world, filled with young women and men who constantly practice the virtues of love, peace, patience, and humility. The change that would take place in our schools and communities would be enormous. Crime and murders would decrease. Hatred and gang violence would be replaced by young people working together for the common good. The dream can be accomplished, but it will require “burning patience.” I hear our spiritual leaders in Boston talking all the time about God bringing revival to the city of Boston. God will not bring revival to the city of Boston, unless we as leaders do the basics. Where there is no love, peace, patience, and humility; hatred, chaos, intolerance, and arrogance reign. And that is exactly what we have today. Villafane continues:

Burning patience speaks to me and informs me that urban ministry requires time, commitment, fervor—in the biblical idiom, to be “filled with the Spirit”—for it is a long haul! We

³⁴ Villafane, 44.

cannot enter the splendid city in a day. The Spirit of God does not produce his “measures of grace” in our earthly city in a day. We must be patient. We must work patiently—but not passively! We must have a “burning patience”—for “at dawn, armed with a burning patience we shall enter the splendid city.”³⁵

Thankfully, God is patient. God can be patient with this sinful world. There is a definite purpose behind God’s patience. Remember the Lord desires that all people be saved.

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”(2 Pet. 3:8-9)

As patient as God is with us, so the leadership team at RBTV must learn to be patient with the young men who attend the camp. No matter how frustrated we may get as leaders, author Geo Bethune affirms, God knows exactly what He is doing:

Upon what daily blasphemies and ungodly crimes, upon what nightly impurities and nameless horrors must God look down! What contempt of his law, what neglect of his gospel, what hardness and infidelity of heart must his all-seeing eye discover! Yet his sun still shines, his rain descends, his fruitful seasons change, and blessed be his holy name! His gospel is offered, his Sabbaths return, his Spirit strives, and the strait gate of his life standeth open. He is the holy and just God, who will by no means clear the guilty, yet he is the long-suffering and the patient

³⁵ Villafane, 46.

God. There is a reason for his long-suffering. His mercy waits, but he is sure of his power.³⁶

ESTABLISHING A PLACE OF PEACE

I am more peaceful now. I think a lot now. Before I used to do whatever and my consequences would be my consequences.

Mike Warren/RBTV graduate

Along with “burning patience” peace must also be administered. After all, Christ is the Prince of Peace, and His Word is the Gospel of Peace.

Bethune establishes a place of peace:

Let us cherish this holy peace: peace with God, peace with our own souls, peace with our fellow men. Nothing will make life pass so pleasantly, the path of duty seem so easy, the trials of earth so light, or the hope of heaven so full of glory. Nothing will resemble us so much to God himself. What infinite tranquility there must be in the Divine Mind!³⁷

What RBTV campers want more than anything is peace of mind, which many have never experienced. Creating a peaceful environment was very important to my father.

We try and display a calmness here at the village. We want peace and kindness to flow like never before. We have seven gardens here because I want these kids to be able to walk in a garden, and sit in a garden. It was something I never had growing up.

Ron Burton Sr./Founder

³⁶ Geo Bethune, *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Swengel, Pennsylvania: Harrison Hall 1839), 88.

³⁷ Bethune, 83.

RBTV campers are not allowed to tease or swear. They cannot say, or do, anything unkind to one another. Teasing is not tolerated because no one can truly understand the hurt a child has encountered in his past.

When kids tease one another, old wounds re-open. Borgman understands as he says, “When we approach the study of those who are weak or hurting, oppressed or in need- or just misunderstood- we approach holy ground. We are moving to the place neglected by the powers of this world but where God is especially at work.”³⁸ The purpose of RBTV is to help young men escape the “hell” they are living in and possibly get a taste of what “heaven” may be like. Villafane yearns for this peace to flow into the city:

Shalom speaks of the mission of “today’s Church—a community of exiles and pilgrims.” Seeking the peace of the city means to seek (1) peace in the community (it is Koinonia), (2) peace (welfare) of others—compassion/concern for all people, but above all for the poor and the needy (it is Diaconia), and (3) peace (wholeness and harmony)—it speaks about reconciliation among races and ethnic groups and above all reconciliation with God (it is Kerygma). It is preaching “be ye reconciled to God.”³⁹

One way we help spread the peace of God at the village is through song. Personally, I have never been blessed with the gift of music, but when I am with the young men at camp the Spirit takes over.

³⁸ Borgman, 7.

³⁹ Villafane 53.

And I am no longer embarrassed by my singing. During the five weeks the campers sing all types of spiritual and uplifting songs about the peace of God: *Let There Be Peace on Earth*, and *Pass It On*. We also sing songs considered classics, tunes from the hit musicals *Sound of Music* and *Oklahoma*. It is incredible to hear more than hundred young men stand together and sing praises to God, or stand on the hill top and hear them bellow out *Climb Every Mountain* and *Lean On Me*. There is no other way to describe these scenes but as the peace of God, transforming the souls of young men.



(RBTV Choir Concert Night 2005)

Indeed music helps create a peaceful atmosphere. The RBTV choir gets better every year. Our choir director, Rhonda Morrison, takes pride in making sure the kids understand the meaning behind the songs they sing. Everyone's favorites are the gospel classic, *One Day At A*

Time, and the newly created RBTV fight song adapted to the music of *Oklahoma*. The campers sing before they eat, and the choir also puts on a concert at the end of the five weeks. It is during the concert time that emotions run high because the kids know their time together is coming to an end.



(From left Paul Burton, Rich Lavin, Ron Jr. & Steve Burton sing)

God has an amazing way of bringing the entire camp together, as we embrace one another in brotherly love and sing praises to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Borgman's words encourage our mission at RBTV.

First, we need to appreciate what music does in our lives. Music is one of the deepest and most holistic forms of human communication, speaking to us physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually in ways that touch us deeply. Music can say things that no other form of communication—expressing our ultimate longings for union and significance at levels that finally demand communication and affirmation from God.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Borgman, 179.



(Choir director Rhonda Morrison leads camp song)

When our kids leave RBTv they will have experienced the peace of God. Whether the peace comes from the songs we sing, the nightly Bible studies, or partaking in quiet times, the campers know God is present. God's peace is unmistakable and irreplaceable. At a time in these young men's lives when they are fragile, Jesus wants them to know that His peace is available to them at all times. After Christ rose from the grave, He appeared in front of His disciples behind closed doors and said to them, "Peace be with you." (Jn. 20:19) The Apostle Paul makes it clear again that God's peace is ever present. *"Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!"* (2 Thess. 3:16). Throughout Scripture we are reminded about the importance of peace. We at RBTv try to extend God's peace to the campers in words and actions.



(Ron Jr. peacefully addresses camp)

LAUGHING WITH GOD'S CHILDREN

My brother Ron Jr. constantly tells the leaders at RBTv that youth ministry involves sacrifice and service. Our kids have been abused on almost every level, so it takes a special heart to love and serve our campers. Borgman reminds us that, “The challenge of youth ministry involves the suffering of children. The question will continue to be raised: Where is God when a child cries out while being sexually abused?”³⁰ Many of our kids have gone through many traumatic experiences still haunt them today. RBTv provides them with an opportunity to hear the Gospel message and experience God’s unfailing love. Bethune says that leadership requires a lot of love:

He loves Christians, because they are beloved by his heavenly Father, bear His image so far as grace has transformed them, and

³⁰ Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* 3.

because their sympathy and friendship is a mutual blessing. He loves all men, because God has commended them to his love; and he desires and delights in their welfare, as God loves the world.⁴¹

Camp is not all hard work. There are funny stories and laughter helping to spread the love of God. The campers work hard and push themselves, but they also have fun. The games and competitions stir up a lot of laughter, a release that can not be underestimated. Laughter is critical at RBTV: laughter can be a cure for a hurting soul. Leaders do not have to be serious all the time. What makes great leaders so admirable is their ability to relate to others on all levels. Leaders need to know when it's time to be serious and when it's time to laugh. Borgman says today's youth have their own sense of humor and there are times when leaders do not have to take their ministries so seriously:

Young people are often longing—sometimes even crying—for adults and the adult church to “lighten up.” Youth ministry couldn't get along without humor. Leaders need it for their own proper perspective. More importantly, humor is a staple of the youth culture, and any successful ministry must allow opportunity for laughter—spontaneous and planned, individual and group.⁴²

⁴¹ Bethune, 37.

⁴² Borgma, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* 153



(Rev. Paul Burton caught up in a Jedi Battle.)



(Campers in a game of Mission Impossible)



(Camper Sam West barely escapes capture.)



(Camper Mike Leonard receives Xmas gift)



(Leaders get ready to serve ice cream to campers.)

Although the campers are not allowed to tease one another, the laughter never stops at RBTV. Borgman says it's important to seek humor that lifts up the soul of a young boy or girl. Although young people should never laugh at the expense of another, serving one another should be fun, and the way we communicate sprinkled with laughter.

If you are going to communicate with young people, you must be willing to see yourself and your life as funny. We seek a humor that heals individuals, that binds people together, that frees people to look for brighter hopes. We seek humor, like good drama, that unifies and inspires. Our world cannot be preserved without comedy. Let us hope there will be more good comedians than greedy comics for young folk who need to laugh. May we not take ourselves too seriously! Let sweltering laughter begin with us and spread to the tense fringes of our ministries.⁴³

Borgman says laughter is medicine for the body and soul. We laugh at RBTB because we love one another. Laughing at our differences, helps relieve the tension the campers face back home. Also, if used correctly positive laughter can be highly effective in a sermon. Laughter brings the campers together and creates friendships that last a life time.



(Campers enjoy a friendly game of tug-of-war)



(Camper receives Xmas gift)

Borgman states:

The Bible is a much funnier book than we realize, and we miss many lessons without such an appreciation of oriental humor. Jesus found himself in many very difficult situations and with

⁴³ Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* 168.

some very slow learners. He used humor in masterful ways that we need to study.⁴⁴

Jesus said to His disciples they may have trouble in their lives but laughter is just around the corner.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

So how do we teach young people to live out the virtues of love, peace, patience, and humility? How can kids truly live the Spirit-filled life? I asked Joe White, founder of Kids Across America and president of Kanakuk Camps in Missouri these questions. Joe White is an incredible man of God, whose ministry has literally transformed the lives of thousands of young men and women throughout the country. Joe is also a personal friend of mine who understands our mission at RBTv. In the interview I tried to get a better understanding of why Joe's ministry was having such a tremendous effect on the lives of inner-city kids. Kids Across America (KAA) involves urban boys and girls from 450 cities across the country. The main purpose of KAA is to train up Christian leaders. Since 1978, their mission has been to transform America, one child at a time. Their focus, similar to that of RBTv, is to build Christian leaders through urban sports camping.

⁴⁴ Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* 166.

Joe what makes KAA so successful?

From the very beginning we started learning how to lead urban kids to Christ and to maintain a godly relationship with Christ throughout the year. In order to do that we created two separate camps. Kaleo is a camp just for our leaders. And KAA is for our campers.

How do the two camps work?

When our young kids come to KAA they come with leaders who are committed to staying in close contact with kids all year round. Not just once a month but several times throughout the week. The Kaleo camp is for our leaders and when they come they get a bubble bath in Jesus. We treat our leaders as if they are the most important people on earth. The key for us is to “revolutionize” our leaders. For eight days our leaders get a homecoming they will never forget. At that time KAA is taking place and we have trained staff to work with the campers. So the leaders who will be with our campers throughout the year are being fed, as well as the campers. At the end of camp both camper and leader are committed to walking with the Lord and each other throughout the year. The kids take a step toward Christ along with the leaders.

How much contact is necessary between leader and camper throughout the year?

Each camper goes home with a leader who is committed to walking with their campers and staying in their lives all week long. We have one leader to eight kids. They meet the campers two to three times a week. It's all about year round discipleship, which is why our Kaleo camp is critical. If we don't pour into our leaders lives first, the kids will go back to the same broken homes and streets again without any support. When the kids come to KAA, they come with their leaders within that community who have committed to being with their kids all year long. It's an awesome experience.

What other types of programs do you have to keep the kids on track?

We have another camp called Higher Ground. This camp is for two weeks out of the summer and it's a three year commitment. At this camp our Kaleo leaders target who they see as the potential leaders of the future. The first year the kids stay at the camp site. The second year the campers do a missions project in America. For example we will send a group down to New Orleans and help with Katrina victims. The third year the kids do a more intense mission project outside of the country in sort of a desperate type of situation.

What do you feel our young men are lacking today? What are they missing in their life that causes them to be so far off the mark?

Paul, our young people are lacking three things. They are lacking leadership, a mentor, and a caring adult. All any young man needs is a guy who loves him and will pour into his life the love of Jesus Christ. And in our cities today it is non-existent. We are here to train Christian leaders. We are here to awaken the Christian leader inside a young man. He may not know it, but that's what we are all about.

How long are the kids a part of KAA?

From the time they are eight years old until they graduate high school. And the results are absolutely fantastic. Obviously, you will always have those kids who fall away. They go back and get shot in the streets. But a number of our kids grow up to become godly Christian leaders with healthy marriages and that is encouraging for us. We must always continue to refine our work and look for more leaders.

What would be your advice to us at RBTV?

I would strongly suggest you guys hire someone full time. Let him be someone you trust, who understands the principles you are trying to teach and let him live in our leadership training camp for a month.

What would that do?

Let us get in his blood what it means to be a leader. RBTV should strongly consider building a Kaleo program at the camp site. Seek the funds to build the program. You will continue to have great kids that come to the camp, but you will also grow as far as leadership is concerned. We now have 800 Kaleo leaders who spend the summer with us. Imagine if you had 800 Paul Burton's out there in New England and all they ever do is minister to the campers and future leaders. You will have multiplied your abilities by 800 fold. The lord will provide the right leader. RBTV should consider bringing on a full time godly man, who is just sold out for Christ. Allow that person to create a great leadership development program at your camp. You will transform inner-city America up there in Boston one child at a time. It's a lofty vision but God will provide for you all.

As usual my discussion with Joe White was inspiring and insightful. Although the suggestions from Joe are thought-provoking and interesting, and our team will consider them, I would need some more in-put to be sure this is God's direction for RBTV. Some questions I have are follow-up statistics from his various mentoring programs. What percentage of the leaders stay in the program long term

and how many young people are they able to keep? I know Joe has incredible life-changing ministry and it is something I plan to visit and explore further.

LIVING BY FAITH AND HUMILITY

I happen to love the book of Hebrews, and especially Hebrews 11, which is known as the role call of the heroes of faith. It reads how *by faith*, great men and women of the Bible went out and did some extraordinary things. This chapter reminds me a lot of my father, Ron Burton. God had given Ron a vision that he had to fulfill. By faith, instead of going somewhere to retire, Ron and his wife JoAnn withdrew their entire life savings and began to build the Ron Burton Training Village. By faith, Ron ignored the advice of his bankers who refused to give him a loan and used his own money to buy the land, upon which he built the first of many buildings.



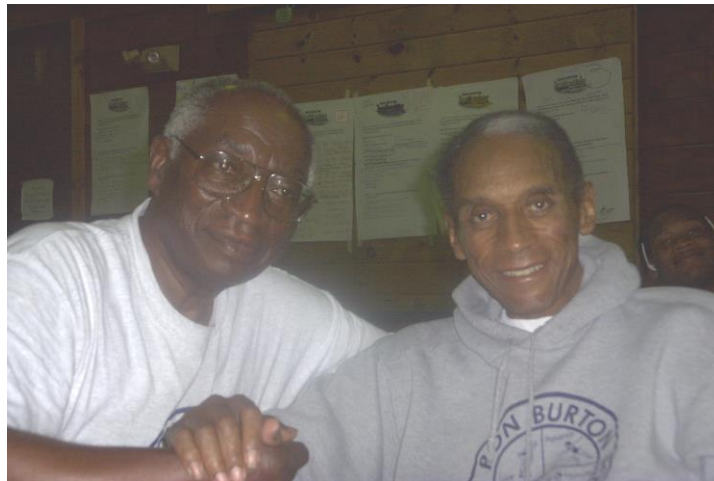
(White House-formerly called the Lodge built in 1987)

These bankers were some of my friends and I knew these guys, but they told me they could not loan me money to do something like this.

Because they said there was no return. But I knew the camp was something God wanted me to do.

Ron Burton Sr./RBTv Founder

Ron Burton always had a servant's heart. He was patient, loving, kind, compassionate, and humble. Ron had no other agenda but to serve young people. He did not want recognition or praise; all he wanted to do was serve. And it was Ron's humility that gave him the focus to reach out to the poor and disadvantaged. Ron had a message of love for young people. He had a story to tell, which he told with elegance and grace. Even when Ron was sick with cancer, he continued to serve with a smile on his face. He truly was a humble, lowly servant with a giant's heart.



(Right: Ron Burton Sr. with his best friend Preston Hampton)

Like Moses, who remained with the children of Israel until his final days, so Ron Burton remained with the kids at his village teaching them

the values of love, peace, patience, and humility. The words of Geo Bethune make clear my father's determination, even in sickness, to stay at RBTV.

Our beloved Master, the pattern of meekness, looking forward to the shame and tortures of the cross, prayed for the wicked hands which crucified and slew him, but submitted as unto God saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." And in the same spirit the dying Stephen would not have his martyrdom laid to his murderers' charge, while he looked upon his cruel death as a shorter passage to heaven's glory. We would condemn ourselves for murmuring against the chastisement of God, when they come in the form of sickness and bereavement; but sickness and death are no more his instruments than our fellow men are. We know that those afflictions are necessary to the discipline of our spirits, to the trial of our faith, and the development of our Christian virtues, and for this reason we rejoice in them.⁴⁵

The Lord really used my father in a mighty way in his final years on earth. His sickness only strengthened his faith and became an amazing testimony for everyone to witness. Although Ron became frail and weak, his desire and fortitude to serve grew stronger. Like many great leaders, Ron remained humble and meek. His legacy still serves as an example for us today at the camp. These words in Bethune's, *Fruit of the Spirit*, especially ministered to me:

It would be little glory for the Christian to meet with no resistance, no suffering, no wounds, in his faithfulness to God amidst a world of sinners. He must endure hardship as a good

⁴⁵ Bethune, 167.

soldier of Christ. The taunts the wounds, the dust of conflict, are all necessary to the splendor of his crown.⁴⁶



(Ron Burton's final talk at RBTV-2003)

Ron Burton started off in life with nothing. He was teased by his peers as a child, and criticized by adults when beginning the camp. Despite the backlash, Ron Burton obeyed God and continued to walk by faith and with humility. Ron wanted humility to be one of the four pillars at RBTV because he knew how far the Lord had brought him. “There is no way I could have gotten this far without Christ,” Ron would tell his children. Ron recognized how important it was to remain humble, no matter how high up God had brought him. Ron understood, as God was with the great heroes in Hebrews 11, so He was also with Ron Burton. Humility is a virtue that must be taught to our young people if there is ever to be positive change in our communities. Bethune captures this thought:

⁴⁶ Bethune, 168.

We must, above all humble ourselves before God in prayer, asking for that Spirit to dwell in our hearts, one of whose fruits is meekness. For none but he who is humble with God, has learned to be lowly among men.⁴⁷



(From left : JoAnn Burton, Ron Jr. and Paul Burton discuss camp.)

So how does RBTV actually teach young people to live out the virtues of love, peace, patience, and humility? Can our kids truly live the Spirit-filled life? What specific lessons and activities does RBTV embrace? As we approach mile four, we will begin to answer these questions.

⁴⁷ Bethune 176.

CHAPTER FOUR

MILE 4: TEACHING LOVE, PEACE, PATIENCE, HUMILITY



“Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.” (Ps 119:89)

Everyday at RBTV our campers get to hear the Gospel message. The Gospel is the heart and soul of the camp. Since God is love and our message is love one another, on the very first day of camp each kid is handed a new Bible. Every morning the kids bring their Bibles with them to breakfast; after eating, the campers are required to spend some quiet time alone with God. During quiet time the campers are given a certain passage of Scripture to memorize. If the topic for the day is love, the campers may be asked to read 1 Corinthians 13 or 1 John 4. Quiet time prepares their hearts and minds to receive God’s message.

Quiet time is only twenty minutes, just long enough for them to begin memorizing the particular passage. Our goal is to have them quote all of 1 Corinthians 13 by the end of camp.

Any good teacher knows that there is a big difference between memorizing Scripture and applying it to life. It's not enough for RBTV campers to quote Scriptures about love, peace, patience and humility; they must also understand the meaning, and apply the Scriptures to life. Dr. Haddon Robinson, one of the best expository preachers of our time, says that application is where biblical preaching comes into play. He writes, "The church in the twentieth century desperately needs biblical preaching."⁴⁸ He believes that in the minds of New Testament writers preaching is God in action. Preaching provides the listener with as much biblical information necessary to make life application. Robinson describes preaching as answering the "so what?" question in a sermon. He explains, "A sermon touches life. It demands practical application...Your people are wrestling with a certain passage of Scripture. They want to know what it means. Unless they understand the text, it's useless to apply it. They don't need exhortation, they need

⁴⁸ Haddon Robinson, *Making A Difference In Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1999), 61.

explanation.”⁴⁹ It is my job at RBTv not only to preach the Gospel message of *love, peace, patience and humility*, but also to show the campers how these virtues work in their lives. At camp we reach our young people through four methods of teaching: sermons, small groups, Bible studies and activities. All four methods reinforce the virtues we hold dear at RBTv.

At this point, I will explain how we teach all four virtues at the camp. Each week I focus and preach on one of the four virtues. During the last, and fifth week I revisit the four virtues to make sure the campers understand what the Bible says about *love, peace, patience and humility* and how the kids can apply the virtues. Remember the goal is to make sure they are living out these virtues once they leave the camp. Since love is the first and most important virtue, let's begin there.

A LESSON ON LOVE

The following is an actual lesson highlighting the virtue of love.

- I. **A Lesson on Love- The purpose of this sermon is to teach the campers what it means to love one another taken from 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.**
 - a. **Bible verse- 1 Corinthians 13:1-8**
 - b. **Group interaction- Campers stand up to quote scripture they were studying during quiet time**

⁴⁹ Robinson 89.

- c. Sermon – Definition of love-**
 - a. example: ESPN: Outside the Lines video**
- d. Group discussion/ activities – campers gather in huddles and work on questionnaire**

After quiet time our campers come together and listen to a twenty-five minute sermon. Today's virtue is love. Oftentimes, I will begin my sermon this way:

SERMON

YOUNG MEN, OUR GOAL HERE AT CAMP IS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. IT'S THE SECOND GREATEST COMMANDMENT IN THE BIBLE. RON BURTON EVEN HUNG THIS WOODEN SIGN ABOVE ME OVER THE DOOR POST. WHAT DOES IT READ? *LOVE ONE ANOTHER*. IT'S BECAUSE HE WANTED EACH AND EVERYONE ONE OF YOU TO SEE IT, KNOW IT, UNDERSTAND IT, AND LIVE IT. DURING QUIET TIME YOU WERE ASKED TO READ AND BEGIN TO MEMORIZE 1 CORINTHIANS 13. WHO HERE THINKS THEY CAN QUOTE IT? WHO WANTS TO GIVE IT A TRY?"

Usually quite a few hands are raised. I typically choose about four campers who want to try and quote the passage. It's amazing to see the show of support the campers have for one another. Whenever someone stands up and speaks it always ends in applause, an action which is uplifting for everyone. A camper has as much time as he wants to quote the passage. Once he begins to struggle someone else may volunteer to help or I encourage him by saying, "Good job! Keep on practicing and soon you will be able to quote the entire passage." By now everyone's attention is on I Corinthians 13 and they are ready to learn. At this time

I pick up my Bible and continue the message. “Here is what the Bible has to say about love. *And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels...through verse 8... love never fails...*” Once I have read the passage and have their attention, I present a real life story to which the campers can all relate.

SERMON con’t

WHEN YOU ALL FIRST ARRIVED HERE, YOU PROBABLY NOTICED THE BIG IRON GATES. WELL DID YOU KNOW THAT AS SOON AS YOU CAME THROUGH THOSE GATES YOU ENTERED INTO A DIFFERENT PLACE? LIKE IN THE MOVIES YOU HAVE BEEN TRANSPORTED INTO THE MAJESTIC, PEACEFUL WORLD OF THE RON BURTON TRAINING VILLAGE. WE HAVE ONE MAIN RULE HERE:(PAUSE) *LOVE ONE ANOTHER*. BUT WHO HERE KNOWS WHAT THAT MEANS OR WHAT THAT EVEN LOOKS LIKE? (I MAY GET A FEW HANDS RAISED) WELL IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT THE PERSON WHO BUILT THIS PLACE, HIS NAME WAS RON BURTON. HE WAS MY FATHER. AND ONE THING MY FATHER ALWAYS LOVED WAS ICE CREAM. I REMEMBER MANY DAYS HE WOULD SIT ME DOWN WITH A BOWL OF ICE CREAM AND BEGIN TO READ THE BIBLE TO ME AND SHARE WITH ME WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. SO IN HONOR OF MY DAD AND SINCE IT’S SO HOT THIS MORNING WHAT DO YOU SAY WE HAVE SOME ICE CREAM FIRST AS I TELL YOU THE REST OF MY STORY ABOUT LOVE. (A THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE USUALLY FOLLOWS, AND THE STAFF QUICKLY HANDS OUT BOWLS OF ICE CREAM. THIS ALSO HELPS KEEPS THEM ALERT AFTER AN EARLY 7-MILE RUN.) THE STORY I AM ABOUT TO SHARE WITH YOU IS TRUE. IN FACT RON BURTON’S LIFE IS AN INCREDIBLE STORY. IT’S AN AMAZING STORY OF EXCELLENCE AND LOVE. AND WHETHER YOU KNOW IT OR NOT EACH ONE OF YOU HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR EXCELLENCE. AND JUST AS MY FATHER SHARED WITH ME, I WILL NOW TELL YOU. YOU SEE YOUNG MEN, IT ALL COMES BACK TO THE NUMBER ONE RULE HERE, WHICH IS LOVE ONE ANOTHER. YOU SEE RON BURTON’S LIFE WAS SO EXCELLENT, WHEN HE DIED IN 2003 THE BOSTON HERALD PRINTED THIS HEADLINE (I HOLD UP THE ARTICLE TO THE CAMPERS) *FIRST HE WAS A PATRIOT...THEN HE BECAME A GIANT*. HE WAS A PATRIOT BECAUSE IN 1960 HE BECAME THE FIRST EVER PICK OF THE BOSTON PATRIOTS. I NEVER SAW MY DAD PLAY A SINGLE DOWN AS A PATRIOT. BUT AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER HE’S ALWAYS BEEN MY GIANT, MY

HERO. IT'S BECAUSE EVER SINCE I WAS A BOY, MY FATHER SHARED WITH ME THE GREATEST GIFT IN THE WORLD, THE GIFT OF LOVE. AND I REMEMBER HE SAT ME DOWN JUST LIKE YOU ARE TODAY AND HE SAID TO ME, PAUL, IF YOU EVER CAPTURE THIS VIRTUE OF LOVE, GOD'S LOVE, THE LORD WILL ALLOW YOU TO EXPERIENCE SOME OF THE GREATEST BLESSINGS IN LIFE. AND THEN HE WOULD READ I CORINTHIANS 13 TO ME. NOW HOW MANY OF YOU WANT TO LIVE AN EXCELLENT LIFE THE WAY RON BURTON DID? (OF COURSE ALL HANDS GO UP) HOW MANY OF YOU ARE TRULY WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER?"

At this point I will read I Corinthians 13 again out loud ending on verse eight and pausing for about ten seconds...

SERMON con't

LET ME SHOW YOU A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHAT THESE VERSES LOOK LIKE TODAY. HOW MANY HERE HAVE HEARD OF ESPN. WELL ESPN: OUTSIDE THE LINES CAME OUT HERE TO CAMP IN 2003 BECAUSE THEY KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THIS PLACE AND ABOUT THE MAN RON BURTON. ESPN CAME OUT HERE AND DID AN EIGHT MINUTE PIECE ON HIS LIFE STORY BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO HEAR HOW AND WHY RON BURTON CREATED THIS VILLAGE. YOU SEE THE LORD GAVE MY FATHER A VISION TO CREATE A PLACE WHERE YOUNG MEN LIKE YOU COULD EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF CHRIST. YOU ARE ALL NOW LIVING TESTIMONIES OF MY FATHER'S LEGACY OF LOVE. TAKE A LOOK AT HIS LIFE STORY, AND THEN YOU WILL DISCOVER WHAT I CORINTHIANS 13 IS ALL ABOUT.

The ESPN: Outside the Line story on Ron Burton was entitled a *Legacy of Love*. The kids can relate to the piece because some of them are actually in the story. They can see first hand the life of Ron Burton and his giving of himself so others could learn the virtue of love. In the piece you can see how bone cancer has taken its toll on my father's body. Despite the pain he was going through, when asked how he

would like to be remembered, Ron Burton says, “I want the kids to keep in their hearts all that I have shared with them. Let me tell you something I am so happy I don’t know what to do.” The story ends with a quote from my brother Steve Burton, “Ron Burton started with nothing, and he’s going to leave here with nothing. But he’s going to leave us with a legacy of how to pass on things and how to love one another, and that’s the greatest gift he can give us.” When the video is over there is not a dry eye in the building, and then I continue with the message.

SERMON con’t

YOU SEE YOUNG MEN RON BURTON GAVE ALL THAT HE HAD PHYSICALLY, FINANCIALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY SO YOU CAN EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF GOD. SO YOU CAN SEE AND UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE YOUR BROTHER AS YOURSELF. MANY OF YOU KNEW RON BURTON AND REMEMBER HOW HE TREATED EVERYONE. LIKE I CORINTHIANS 13 TEACHES, RON WAS NEVER ARROGANT OR PROUD IN HIS SUCCESS. HE NEVER TOOK TIME OUT TO CELEBRATE WHEN HE SCORED A TOUCHDOWN WHEN PLAYING FOR THE PATRIOTS OR BRAGGED ABOUT THE MATERIAL WEALTH WITH WHICH GOD HAD BLESSED HIM. INSTEAD HE REMAINED HUMBLE AND GAVE ALL THAT HE HAD IN ORDER TO SPREAD THE LOVE OF GOD TO YOU. HIS ONLY AGENDA WAS TO SERVE YOU AND TO TEACH YOU HOW TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. THAT IS WHY THIS ENTIRE CAMP IS BUILT AND RUN ON LOVE. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES ALL THINGS, HOPES ALL THINGS AND ENDURES ALL THINGS. THIS PLACE IS HERE BECAUSE GOD WANTS YOU TO EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE. THE SAME LOVE CHRIST GAVE MY FATHER, HE PASSED ON TO ME. AND NOW I PASS THAT SAME LOVE ON TO YOU. SO NOW THE CHOICE IS YOURS. YOU HAVE SEEN FIRST HAND WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE. YOU SAW IN THE VIDEO HOW HE TREATED OTHER PEOPLE, EVEN WHEN THEY TEASED HIM AND CALLED HIM “NOTHING.” YOU CAN SEE HOW GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO FOLLOW AFTER HIS WORD. NOW ALL THE ATTENTION FALLS ON

YOU. WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THIS GIFT OF LOVE? GOD DESIRES YOU TO EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE AND SHARE WITH YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND YOU. LET US PURSUE THIS LOVE TOGETHER AS A FAMILY, AND LIKE RON BURTON, LEARN TO LIVE THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY, WHICH IS LOVE.

At this point I have all the campers work together in their huddles and share with one another their opinions of I Corinthians 13. I will give each huddle a hand out questionnaire for them to discuss as a team. The campers have about fifteen minutes to go over the questions and then follow up with an open discussion. Each huddle has a spokesperson that will share the ideas they came up with during their group discussion. I also explain that they do not all have to agree with one another. The purpose is to get them thinking about love in light of 1 Corinthians 13.

DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS FOR 1 CORINTHIANS 13

1. BASED ON 1 COR. 13 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE QUALITIES OF A PERSON WHO HAS LOVE IN HIS HEART?
2. IS IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO DISPLAY THESE QUALITIES ON THE PLAYING FIELD OR AT SCHOOL? WHY?
3. WHO IN YOUR HUDDLE IS THE CLOSEST EXAMPLE OF 1 COR. 13? IN WHAT WAY?
4. HOW DID THE ESPN VIDEO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT LOVE IS?

5. IN WHAT WAY DID RON BURTON'S LIFE HELP YOU BETTER UNDERSTAND 1 COR. 13?
6. DO YOU FIND IT HARD TO PUT 1 COR. 13 INTO ACTION? HOW CAN YOU APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE NOW?
7. HOW CAN WE AS A CAMP FAMILY HELP EACH OTHER LIVE OUT I COR. 13 EVERYDAY?

This is one format I would use that week for preaching on love.

Obviously, not all of my sermons will have a video. Some of my object lessons will include personal demonstrations with the campers or other means of youth involvement. The goal is to keep the kids engaged in a dialogue about love and how they can apply it to life. Other sermons on love may include Romans 12 on serving others in love, and Luke 6 on loving our enemies would follow a similar format.

A LESSON ON PEACE

This lesson uses the surroundings to highlight the virtue of peace.

- II. **A Lesson on Peace-** The purpose of this sermon is to teach the campers that no matter what valleys they must go through in life, Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd will be their peace.

- a. Bible verse: Psalm 23

- b. Group interaction-

1. I lead the campers on a short walk down to the lake. Along the way we will pass a number of gardens they must write about.

- c. Sermon – A Sermon by the lake –**
 - 1. Campers learn about the peace of God**
- d. Group discussion/ activities – campers write their own psalm and read out loud to group**

The peace the kids experience at camp is special. The gardens, the lake, the infrastructure all help make the village a serene place to live. I would be remiss not to use the setting in my sermons. So often when Jesus taught His disciples He used the surroundings to make His point:

Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry. And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be fruit from you. And fig tree withered... And Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to this fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea, it shall happen. And everything you ask in prayer believing you shall receive. (Matt. 21:18-22)

It’s amazing how practical Jesus was in all of His teachings. Over the years, I have discovered the scenery at RBTV can make for great illustrations. Professor Haddon Robinson says illustrations are critical in any good sermon:

Through illustrations, the preacher has revealed something about his reading, his thinking, and awareness of life. When some areas of a speaker’s life overlap with the listeners’, they are more likely to listen. He’s gained some credibility. An ingredient in effective

preaching is using specific material that connects with lives in the congregation.⁵⁰

Peace is important because our young men are coming from much turmoil and distress. They are not sure what the peace of God is all about. They have no idea what it's like to have peace in their hearts. When we begin the second week at RBTV I get excited because I know peace is something they are definitely searching for and are longing to experience.



(At RBTV campers can experience the peace of God.)

For this particular sermon on peace, the campers experienced a garden tour. I asked them to bring their Bibles, paper, and a pencil. We began to stroll through the village admiring the beautiful landscape. I asked them to jot down anything that stood out in their minds about the scenery and their feeling while observing it. Our final destination was a

⁵⁰ Robinson, 32.

grassy peninsula where the campers could experience a beautiful summer breeze by the lake. The campers gathered together at the lake for the first time and I could tell they are alert and ready to learn. There were just a few puffy clouds in the sky, the temperature was just right, and the lake was perfectly still. The scene was like something shown on Nature Channel. The campers were relaxed and ready to receive a Word from the Lord. As they all took a seat on the grass, I stood before them and began *A SERMON BY THE LAKE*, based on Psalm 23:



(Side view of the lake at RBTv)

SERMON

“WE ALL HAVE THOSE MOMENTS IN OUR LIFE WHERE WE WISH TIME WOULD STAND STILL. WE WISH TIME WOULD STOP....BECAUSE WHAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING IS SO MAJESTIC, SO HEAVENLY, AND SO POWERFUL WE WISH YOU COULD LAST IN THE MOMENT FOREVER. I

GUESS THAT IS WHAT HEAVEN WILL BE LIKE. AND THOSE EXPERIENCES ARE PRECIOUS MOMENTS IN LIFE THAT STAY WITH US FOREVER. WELL MINE WAS HERE AT THIS LAKE WITH MY DAD ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO. WE WENT ON A BOAT RIDE TOGETHER ON THIS LAKE. MAN, IT WAS A PERFECT DAY. A FEW YEARS LATER I WROTE A POEM ABOUT THAT DAY BECAUSE IT WAS SO SPECIAL TO ME. ALLOW ME TO READ IT TO YOU:

A PERFECT DAY by Paul Burton

WE SAT OUT ON THE LAKE THAT WARM SEPTEMBER DAY. THE WATER WAS STILL, THE BREEZE WAS LIGHT, AND THE AIR WAS AS CLEAN AS THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING.

WE LAUGHED, WE TALKED, WE PRAYED, WE SHARED A GLASS OF LEMONADE.

WE FORGOT ABOUT THE PAST, NEVER DISCUSSED THE FUTURE. INSTEAD WE JUST SEIZED THE MOMENT...JUST A FATHER AND HIS SON WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD.

AS THE SUN BEGAN TO SET, WE PULLED BACK TO SHORE. PRAISE BE TO GOD... IT WAS A PERFECT DAY.

I WROTE THAT POEM A FEW YEARS AGO. BUT YOU AND I BOTH KNOW, YOUNG MEN, LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS LIKE THAT. LIFE IS JUST NOT ALL THAT SIMPLE AND PEACEFUL. SOMETIMES THE ROAD WE TRAVEL CAN GET A LITTLE ROUGH. THERE ARE THOSE TIMES WHERE THE THINGS WE ENCOUNTER ARE SO PAINFUL, SO DARK, AND LIFE CHANGING WE WISH WE COULD REMOVE OURSELVES FROM THE PICTURE ALL TOGETHER. BUT REGARDLESS OF WHAT IT IS WE GO THROUGH... BOTH THE GOOD AND THE BAD... THOSE MOMENTS HAVE A WAY OF IMPACTING OUR LIVES FOREVER. THE PICTURES, THE IMAGES ARE CRYSTAL CLEAR IN OUR MINDS AND THE FEELINGS CONSUME OUR HEARTS.

ONE THING THAT'S SO POWERFUL ABOUT THE BIBLE PARTICULARLY THE BOOK OF PSALMS IS HOW THE WRITER EXPRESSES HIS FEELINGS- NOW, YOUNG MEN, THE PSALMS ARE BASICALLY A BUNCH OF POEMS- ABOUT WHAT THE WRITER IS FEELING OR SOMETHING HE HAS EXPERIENCED. FOR EXAMPLE IN PSALM 62 A MAN NAMED DAVID WRITES HOW IMPORTANT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS. AND HOW HIS SOUL LONGS TO HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD. WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO IS CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR A MOMENT AND PICTURE AN EXPERIENCE THAT CHANGED YOUR LIFE. IT CAN BE A HAPPY – SAD- GREAT OR BAD EXPERIENCE. PICTURE WHAT IT WAS LIKE AND I WANT YOU TO WRITE ABOUT IT IN FIRST PERSON FORM AS IF YOU

ARE LIVING IT OR HAVE ALREADY LIVED THROUGH IT. THIS IS YOUR STORY, YOUR PSALM SO TELL IT THE WAY YOU LIKE.” (They have about 10 minutes to write their psalm. Afterwards they can stand up and read their psalms out loud. They don’t all have to read but most will like to share their poem.)



(Campers write a psalm about their own lives)

GROUP ACTIVITY: Campers read their psalms out loud to one another. This activity can take about twenty minutes. They don’t discuss the poems after they read them. The purpose is to get the campers to think about each other and their struggles through life. There is always a long, silent pause after a psalm is read.

SERMON con’t

“NOW TURN WITH ME TO PSALM 23- IT’S A PSALM WITH WHICH SOME OF YOU ARE PROBABLY FAMILIAR. IT’S A POWERFUL POEM WRITTEN BY THE SAME MAN WHO WROTE PSALM 62, KING DAVID. IT GIVES US A CLEAR PICTURE OF HOW DAVID IS FEELING – AND THERE IS A LOT OF PEACE AND ASSURANCE IN THIS PASSAGE BUT YET IT DOESN’T TAKE AWAY FROM THE HARDSHIPS AND REALITY OF LIFE. IT READS “*THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD...*”

IN THESE SHORT 6 VERSES WE LEARN MUCH ABOUT DAVID- ABOUT HIS CHARACTER AND FAITH. HE DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS A SHEEP- WALKING SIDE BY SIDE WITH HIS SHEPHERD. HE HAS COMPLETE AND TOTAL TRUST IN WHERE THE SHEPHERD IS LEADING HIM- HE’S NOT CONCERNED ABOUT WHERE HE IS GOING- HE KNOWS THAT HIS SHEPHERD WILL LEAD HIM TO ONE OF TWO PLACES- GREEN PASTURES OR BESIDE QUIET WATERS. AND IT’S IN THIS PLACE THAT

THE SHEEP RESTORES HIS SOUL. HE REENERGIZES HIMSELF – HE CAN BREATHE AGAIN. IT IS HERE THE SHEEP EXPERIENCE PEACE...

AND THIS AWESOME SHEPHERD WILL ONLY GUIDE HIS SHEEP IN PATHS THAT WILL LEAD TO RIGHTEOUSNESS- THAT WHICH IS GOOD AND NOBLE BECAUSE THAT'S THE TYPE OF SHEPHERD HE IS. HE LOVES HIS SHEEP AND WANTS THE BEST CARE FOR THEM.

BUT LIKE MANY SHEEP THERE IS ALWAYS THE DANGER OF STRAYING AWAY. LIFE IS FULL OF TWISTS AND TURNS... HEARTACHE AND PAIN. DAVID SAYS EVEN THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH I FEAR NO EVIL BECAUSE HE KNOWS HIS SHEPHERD WALKS WITH HIM AND COMFORTS HIM IN THE VALLEY.

AND AS LONG AS THE SHEPHERD IS LEADING THE WAY THE SHEEP KNOWS HE'S IN GOOD HANDS. AND THE SHEPHERD IT WILL GUIDE HIM ALONG THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

YOUNG MEN. WE ARE LIKE THAT SHEEP DAVID DESCRIBES IN PSALM 23. AND CHRIST IS OR CAN BE OUR GREAT SHEPHERD. AND RIGHT NOW YOU ARE LIVING EXAMPLES OF PSALM 23. GOD IN HIS INEXHAUSTIBLE GRACE AND INFINITE WISDOM KNEW EVEN BEFORE YOU WERE BORN THAT YOU WOULD BE HERE TODAY. AND HE WILL CAUSE YOU TO LIE DOWN IN THESE GREEN PASTURES AND LEAD YOU BESIDE QUIET WATERS...FOR THE PURPOSE OF RESTORING YOUR SOUL. I WAS TALKING WITH FORMER CAMPER BRIAN CASEY THE OTHER DAY. MOST OF YOU REMEMBER BRIAN. HE TOLD ME HE COULD NOT WAIT TO GET BACK TO CAMP TO REENERGIZE HIS SOUL. BRIAN TOLD ME TO TELL YOU ALL TO SEIZE THIS MOMENT IN LIFE. THIS IS A TIME OF GREAT PEACE. GOD IS IN THIS PLACE. YOU MAY THINK YOU GOT HERE ON YOUR OWN, OR PERHAPS YOU WERE FORCED TO COME TO RBTV. BUT LET ME TELL YOU GOD BROUGHT YOU HERE THAT YOU MAY HAVE PEACE EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY BE WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH. ONLY GOD KNOWS YOUR HARDSHIP, YOUR STRUGGLE. ONLY GOD KNOWS HOW FAR YOU HAVE STRAYED. BUT HE HAS CALLED YOU TO SHARE IN HIS PEACE. HE HAS COVERED YOU WITH HIS GRACE THAT YOU MAY HAVE PEACE IN YOUR HEART. AND RIGHT NOW YOU MAY BE WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DEATH. YOUR DAYS ON THIS EARTH ARE NUMBERED. AND NO MATTER HOW DEEP IN THE VALLEY YOU MAY HAVE SUNK. IT MAY BE BECAUSE OF SOMETHING YOUR PARENTS DID, OR MAYBE BECAUSE SOMETHING YOU DID. PERHAPS YOU HAVE NOT FALLEN INTO THE VALLEY JUST YET, BUT YOUR TIME IS AT HAND. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE HOW DEEP AND DARK THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH IS...LISTEN THE GOOD SHEPHERD, JESUS CHRIST, WITH HIS CELESTIAL STAFF IS PULLING YOU BACK INTO HIS LOVING FOLD.

AND NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOUR OPPOSITION- NO MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE RALLIED AGAINST YOU AND WANT TO SEE YOU FALL- GOD IS PREPARING A TABLE BEFORE YOU IN THEIR VERY PRESENCE- HE WILL ANOINT YOU BY HIS SPIRIT SO YOU CAN STAND FIRM AND NOT WAVER- HE WILL POUR OUT HIS SPIRIT UPON YOU...HE WILL POUR OUT HIS BLESSING UPON BLESSING UPON BLESSING UPON BLESSINGS UNTIL YOUR CUP OVER FLOWS. AND WHEN YOU HAVE THAT BLESSED ASSURANCE. WHEN YOU HAVE THAT PEACE, YOU WILL SAY AS DAVID DID, SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY WILL FOLLOW ME NOT JUST DURING THE FIVE WEEKS HERE AT THIS CAMP- SURELY GOODNESS AND LOVE WILL FOLLOW ME NOT JUST THROUGH YOUR DAYS IN HIGH SCHOOL. SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME NOT JUST THROUGH YOUR COLLEGE CAREER.- DAVID SAYS SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY AND PEACE SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER! GOD'S LOVE AND MERCY GOES FAR BEYOND OUR DAYS ON EARTH. OH WHEN I THINK OF MY FATHER AND THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US... THE GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD EVEN TOUCHES THEM- SURELY GOODNESS AND LOVE SHALL FOLLOW US ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES AND ONE DAY WE ALL WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER. AND GOD'S HOUSE YOUNG MEN IS A HOUSE OF TOTAL PEACE....MAY THE LORD GOD BLESS YOU ALL AND MAY THE PEACE OF GOD GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS...AMEN."

The most powerful part of the sermon was when the campers stood up and shared their psalms with one another. Haddon Robinson teaches this technique to seminary students. After I read my own poem about the experience I had with my father, the campers knew it was all right to let down their guard. It was a way of disarming my audience. It's not a trick, but a way of saying we are all in this struggle for peace together. God has an amazing way of tearing down the walls of separation between teenage boys. When kids are willing to open up and share their stories with one another, a powerful bond is formed and

what was once a group of individuals now becomes a family. Young boys have a lot to say. They have much on their heart and are willing to share it, if someone is willing to listen. When they know it is safe to open up, and no one will laugh at them or judge them; look out, because God can do a mighty work during these moments. After the lesson, the campers can either keep their own poems or pass them in to me.

GROUP DISCUSSION: Memorizing, sharing, praying

The final part of this lesson on peace is the group interaction and prayer. The campers break into groups of three or four. This group discussion is not huddle or team based. They can either be with their best friends or someone they don't spend a lot of time with during camp. The point is to get them thinking more about the peace of God. For the first ten minutes they read and begin to memorize Psalm 23. Next, they test each other to see who can quote the most verses. Then they share with one another what the peace of God means in light of the psalms they wrote about themselves. In closing I read Philippians 4:4-7. They remain in their groups and share with one another their concerns back home and pray for one another.

A LESSON ON PATIENCE

Because it's a long road ahead for many of the campers, this lesson will highlight the virtue of patience.



(Campers on their way to the cross)

There is really no way to successfully live the Christian life without having patience. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. Patience is what God requires us to have as followers of Christ. My father told me patience was not my best quality. I think he's right. But if we truly want to grow closer to God, patience is a fruit we must bear. At times of course we all lose our patience. At RBTV, patience is a virtue I must pray extra for everyday as I deal with the young men.

III. A Lesson on Patience- The purpose of this sermon is to teach the campers when the road becomes difficult to have patience and endure to the end.

a. Bible Verse: James 1: 2-4

b. Sermon- Long Road Ahead

1. Campers learn what it means to have patience

2. Show the campers a 10-minute clip on Dr. Martin Luther King.

c. Group discussion/ activities – campers take a walk to the rose garden and they share with one another what they learned about patience through Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s life.

1. Hand out questions

There are many ways to discuss patience. Here is one in a lesson I plan to use this summer.

SERMON

“FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS WE TALKED A LOT ABOUT LOVE. THIS WEEK I WANT TO FOCUS ON THE THIRD VIRTUE THAT IS WRITTEN ON YOUR SHIRT. THE THIRD VIRTUE IS CALLED PATIENCE. WHEN YOU SEARCH THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES YOU WILL DISCOVER THE BIBLE HAS A LOT TO SAY ABOUT BEING PATIENT AND HAVING PATIENCE. MY SERMON TITLE THIS MORNING IS BE CALLED *THE LONG ROAD AHEAD*. (PAUSE)

SO I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU THIS MORNING- AND THAT IS – IS THERE ANYONE IN THIS ROOM WHO HAS ENOUGH PATIENCE TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY THEY HAVE IN FRONT OF THEM RIGHT NOW? AND I AM NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT THE FIVE WEEKS HERE AT RBTV- I AM TALKING ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY OF YOUR LIFE.

BECAUSE I NEED TO GET YOU TO SEE-AND UNDERSTAND AND BELIEVE THAT NO MATTER WHAT YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH IN THE PAST OR WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW OR WHAT YOU WILL GO THROUGH IN THE FUTURE- YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND

THAT GOD HAS A PERFECT PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE. AND THE LORD ALSO HAS CERTAIN THINGS HE WANTS YOU TO ACHIEVE...OPPORTUNITIES HE WANTS YOU TO GRAB HOLD OF- THE QUESTION IS, DO YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE TO SEE IT THROUGH? TURN WITH ME TO JAMES 1 AND LET'S READ VERSES 2 THROUGH FOUR AND LET'S DISCOVER TOGETHER WHY PATIENCE IS SUCH A CRITICAL VIRTUE TO HAVE IN ORDER FOR US TO LIVE A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE. (Read James 1:2-4)

JAMES TELLS US IN LIFE WE ARE GOING TO ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TYPES OF TRIALS. HOW MANY HERE ARE GOING THROUGH A TRIAL RIGHT NOW? WHO HERE IS GOING THROUGH SOMETHING THAT IS PAINFUL OR UNPLEASANT? WELL JAMES SAYS WHEN WE GO THROUGH THESE DARK TIMES IN OUR LIVES WE ARE TO COUNT IT AS PURE JOY. ANYONE HERE WANT TO TAKE A GUESS WHY JAMES SAYS THIS? (wait for any volunteers)

THE REASON HE SAYS THIS IS BECAUSE GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING. GOD IS IN THE PROCESS OF MOLDING AND SHAPING US INTO BECOMING THE MEN OF GOD WE ARE CALLED TO BE. YOU SEE WHEN WE SUFFER THROUGH A TRIAL IT CAN PRODUCE IN US THE VIRTUE YOU SEE HERE ON YOUR SHIRT CALLED PATIENCE. PATIENCE IS THE ABILITY TO SUFFER THROUGH SOMETHING VERY DIFFICULT AND TRUSTING GOD TO BRING YOU THROUGH THE TRIAL. PATIENCE REQUIRES FAITH. AND SOMETIMES THE TRIALS WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH MAY TAKE YEARS TO OVERCOME. SOMETIMES THE TRIALS WE GO THROUGH MAY LAST A LIFE TIME. BUT WE CAN COUNT EVERY TRIAL WE GO THROUGH AS JOY BECAUSE LOOK AT THE END RESULT OF THE TRIAL... VERSE 3-4 THE TESTING OF OUR FAITH PRODUCES WHAT? IT PRODUCES ENDURANCE..IT PRODUCES PATIENCE. AND LET PATIENCE HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK IN OTHER WORDS GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO DEVELOP PATIENCE BECAUSE IN THE END YOU WILL BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE AND NOT IN NEED OF ANYTHING.

SO DO YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE THAT DESPITE THE REJECTION WE MAY FACE. DESPITE THE DARK CLOUDS THAT HANG OVER OUR HEADS OR THE LONGSUFFERING WE MUST ENDURE. DO WE HAVE THE PATIENCE TO KEEP ON GOING UNTIL THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY BURST WIDE OPEN? I ONCE KNEW A MAN WHO HAD THAT TYPE OF PATIENCE. HIS NAME WAS DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. IN THE MIDST OF SOME OF THE HARSHTEST RACISM AND HATRED HE AND ALL OF THOSE WHO RALLIED BEHIND HIS NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENT...THEY NEVER LOST THEIR PATIENCE. DR. KING AND THOSE WHO SURROUNDED HIM WERE ALL BEATEN AND THROWN IN JAIL BUT YET THEY NEVER TOOK THEIR EYES OFF CHRIST. THEY HAD VISCIOUS POLICE DOGS GOING AFTER THEM AND FIRE HOSES

TURNED ON THEM ALL BECAUSE THEY STOOD UP FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE. BLACKS IN THE 60'S WERE SECOND CLASS CITIZENS, TREATED LESS THAN ANY HUMAN SHOULD EVER BE TREATED BUT THEY NEVER GAVE UP. AND WHEN HIS TIME CAME - BOY DID HE SEIZE HIS OPPORTUNITY- TO SPEAK OUT. BUT HE DID NOT SPEAK OUT IN ANGER. THE PEOPLE WHO FOUGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS DID NOT STRIKE BACK IN HATRED EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE HATED. THEY RESPONDED TO THEIR ENEMIES WITH LOVE AND AN INSURMOUNTABLE PATIENCE. AND BECAUSE THEY KEPT THEIR PATIENCE...BECAUSE DR, KING RESPONDED IN LOVE THEY ALL ARE A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHAT JAMES IS TALKING ABOUT IN THESE VERSES. THE TESTING OF THEIR FAITH PRODUCED IN THEM AMAZING ENDURANCE. THEY TRUSTED GOD AND GOD TRANSFORMED THEM INTO A PERFECT FORCE THE WORLD COULD NO LONGER IGNORE. TAKE A LOOK AT HISTORY AND LISTEN TO HOW DR, KING TELLS IT."

(Here they watch a ten-minute video clip of the civil rights movement. The scenes are from when the fire hoses and dogs were unleashed on the blacks in Alabama. The clip also has an incredible speech by Dr. King and he talks about the need to endure suffering. It's a perfect clip for our campers because King talks about the virtues of patience, love, and peace.)

SERMON con't

"YOUNG MEN, IT'S BECAUSE OF THEIR PATIENCE, BECAUSE OF THEIR LOVE YOU AND I CAN SIT HERE TODAY IN PEACE. LOOK AROUND YOU YOUNG MEN. WE ARE A CAMP OF ALL DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES. PEOPLE OF ALL DIFFERENT COLOR AND WE TREAT EACH OTHER AS BROTHERS. IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS. BUT WHEN WE PUT ON PATIENCE LIKE THEY DID IN THE 60S AND ARE WILLING TO SUFFER THROUGH THE HARDSHIPS OF LIFE, THE LORD WILL BRING US THROUGH SOME OF THE DARKEST TIMES IN OUR LIVES AND WE WILL COME OUT PERFECT ON THE OTHER SIDE. WE MAY NOT HAVE TO ENDURE THE HARSH RACISM AS THEY DID IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. OUR SUFFERING MAY BE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, BUT OUR RESOLVE MUST BE AS FAITHFUL AS IT WAS BACK THEN. THEY ARE A GREAT EXAMPLE FOR US TO FOLLOW TODAY. REMEMBER WHAT JAMES SAYS, SUFFERING PRODUCES IN US ENDURANCE. BUT LET ENDURANCE HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK- IN OTHER WORDS ALLOW GOD TO CONTINUE TO MOLD AND SHAPE YOU AS YOU GO THROUGH YOUR TRIAL. AND IN TIME, AS YOU GET TRANSFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST YOU WILL BECOME MATURE, COMPLETE LACKING IN NOTHING. IT TAKES PATIENCE YOUNG MEN. IT'S SUCH AN AWESOME VIRTUE. IT'S SUCH A POWERFUL FRUIT. IT'S THE KEY TO A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE. WITH PATIENCE GOD CAN USE YOU IN SUCH A MIGHTY WAY. WITH PATIENCE YOU CAN OVERCOME YOUR DARKEST TRIAL. LIKE DR.

KING SAID WITH PATIENCE YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD AROUND YOU. YOUNG MEN YOUR TIME IS AT HAND. YOU MAY BE ENDURING SOMETHING EXTREMELY TOUGH RIGHT NOW BUT JAMES TELLS US TO CONSIDER IT ALL JOY. NOT THE TRIAL ITSELF, BUT THE FACT THAT GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING AWESOME IN YOUR LIFE. AND CHRIST THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PRODUCING IN YOU PATIENCE SO THAT YOU WILL BECOME THE GREAT MEN OF GOD HE HAS CALLED YOU TO BE.

I STARTED OFF THIS SERMON BY ASKING IF ANYONE IN THIS ROOM HAD ENOUGH PATIENCE TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY YOU HAVE IN FRONT OF YOU RIGHT NOW. NOW IS THE TIME. GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO THIS VILLAGE FOR A PURPOSE. SO YOU CAN LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING PATIENCE IN ORDER TO LIVE THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE."

GROUP ACTIVITY/INTERACTION

For the last part of the sermon I want the kids to witness something beautiful, so I will take them to the top of a hill that overlooks the rose garden. My goal is to get them to see something complete, which had a rough beginning. Just off to the right of the rose garden is land that is under construction. It's a disaster area because there are roots, rocks, and fallen trees everywhere. The kids can see the clear transformation from something under construction to a complete work.



(The Rose Garden completed)

SERMON con't

“YOU SEE THIS ROSE GARDEN, YOUNG MEN, ITS BEAUTIFUL RIGHT? WELL IT WASN'T ALWAYS THIS WAY. THERE WAS A TIME THIS GARDEN WASN'T SO PRETTY. WHEN IT WAS UNDER CONSTRUCTION YOU WOULD'VE NEVER HAD GUESSED IT WOULD TURN INTO A ROSE GARDEN. THERE WERE BROKEN TREES AND ROCKS EVERYWHERE JUST AS IT IS OVER THERE. THERE WERE UGLY TREE STUMPS AND GIANT ROOTS STICKING OUT OF THE GROUND. BUT NOW LOOK AT IT. IT TOOK ABOUT THREE YEARS TO COMPLETE THIS GARDEN. THROUGH PATIENCE AND HARD WORK LOOK AT THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS. THE SAME GOES FOR YOUR LIFE. AS BEAUTIFUL AS THIS GARDEN IS, BY NOW MANY OF US KNOW THAT LIFE IS NOT A BED OF ROSES ALL THE TIME. THERE ARE DARK DAYS AND LONG SLEEPLESS NIGHTS. THERE ARE DAYS WHEN WE ARE NOT SURE IF THE SUN WILL EVER SHINE IN OUR FAVOR AGAIN- THERE ARE DAYS WHERE THE HURT AND REJECTION SOME OF US FACE CUTS THROUGH US LIKE A KNIFE PIERCING THE HEART- OR WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE OUR NEXT MEAL IS COMING FROM, OR IF MOM OR DAD WILL COME HOME ANGRY AND DRUNK OR HIGH. REMEMBER WHAT JAMES SAYS. THE TRIALS YOU ENCOUNTER HAVE A PURPOSE. THEY ARE MAKING YOU INTO THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON YOU ARE CALLED TO BE.

TODAY IS A SPECIAL DAY THE LORD HAS MADE FOR YOU. GOD HAS BROUGHT US TOGETHER FOR JUST A SHORT TIME TO EXPERIENCE HIS PEACE AND LOVE IF ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME. NOT THAT OUR TROUBLES HAVE GONE AWAY- THEY'LL BE BACK AGAIN SOME DAY. AND WHEN THEY RETURN I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THIS DAY. I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THE LORD AND HOW HE IS PRODUCING IN YOU PATIENCE. SO WHEN STORMS OF LIFE HIT AND THE ARROWS OF SATAN SHOOT OUT AT YOU A THOUSAND TIMES A MINUTE AND YOU'RE NOT SURE IF YOU CAN STAND THE PAIN- I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER WHAT JAMES SAYS. COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU

ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS. BECAUSE SOON YOU WILL DEVELOP ENDURANCE AND THAT ENDURANCE ONCE IT IS WORKED OUT WILL MAKE YOU COMPLETE AND PERFECT, LACKING IN NOTHING.”

At this point I would have the campers break off into huddles again and answer the following questions:

RBTV DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON PATIENCE

1. WHAT DID YOU GUYS TAKE AWAY FROM THE DR. KING VIDEO?
2. HOW CAN YOU DISPLAY MORE PATIENCE AS A HUDDLE?
3. SHARE WITH ONE ANOTHER ONE TRIAL YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED AND HOW YOU THINK PATIENCE COULD HAVE HELPED?
4. HOW CAN THIS PARTICULAR PASSAGE IN JAMES HELP YOU DEAL WITH THE TRIALS THAT ARE GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?
5. IS BEING PATIENT A STRUGGLE FOR YOU AND WHY?
6. WHAT ROLE DOES PATIENCE HAVE ON THE PLAYING FIELD?

7. HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY BACK HOME WHEN IT COMES TO BEING PATIENT?

A LESSON ON HUMILITY

Ron Burton personified this virtue. We highlight through the following lesson the virtue of humility.

Every camper at RBTV deeply desires to become huddle leader one day. They think it's the best position in the world. After all, leaders have all the clout, they enjoy all the privileges and get the most breaks, right? Wrong. What many of our young men fail to realize is that becoming a leader requires a sacrifice of all the above. It's what I call the one sided see-saw, where the leader always remains on the bottom. Humility is an interesting and important virtue to teach. I think this lesson goes well with young men.

IV. A Lesson in Humility- The purpose of this sermon is to teach the campers that they must have humility in order to become great leaders.

a. Bible Verse: Matthew 23: 1-12

1. Teaching the campers the importance of humility by concentrating on verses 11-12 main focus

2. NFL Films/ Terrell Owens vs. Ron Burton

b. Group Activity/Discussions-

1. 5 Ways to show Humility

2. In Your Own Words

SERMON

“HUMILITY! IT’S ONE OF OUR FOUR VIRTUES HERE AT RBTV. ANYONE WANT TO GIVE A SHOT AT WHAT THEY THINK HUMILITY IS? (a few hands raise) CAN YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY? WHY DO YOU THINK HUMILITY IS AN IMPORTANT VIRTUE TO HAVE?

MOST OF US HERE HAVE SEEN THE FOOTBALL HIGHLIGHTS OF MY FATHER. IF YOU HAVEN’T YOU ARE IN FOR A TREAT. BUT IN THE HIGHLIGHT VIDEO- WHO HERE CAN TELL ME WHAT MY FATHER DID AFTER EVERYTIME HE SCORED A TOUCHDOWN? (wait for answer) THAT’S RIGHT HE ALWAYS HANDED THE BALL BACK TO THE REFEREE. HE NEVER TOOK TIME OUT TO CELEBRATE OR SHOW BOAT. IM CURIOUS WHEN YOU GUYS SCORE OR HIT A BIG SHOT WHAT DO YOU DO? WHAT IS YOUR VICTORY DANCE? (wait for some answers) HUMILITY IS SO IMPORTANT BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW HOW FAST THINGS CAN CHANGE. YOU COULD BE ON TOP OF THE WORLD ONE MOMENT AND FALL FLAT ON YOUR FACE THE NEXT. BUT THERE IS A LOT OF PEOPLE LOOKING FOR ATTENTION IN OUR WORLD TODAY. THEY WANT TO BE SEEN AND HEARD AND REVERED BY OTHERS. MANY ATHLETES TODAY LOVE TO SEE THEMSELVES IN THE HEADLINES OR IN NEON LIGHTS.

THE OPPOSITE OF HUMILITY IS PRIDE. AND PRIDE CAN KEEP A YOUNG MAN FROM REACHING HIS DESTINY. PRIDE CAN PREVENT A YOUNG MAN FROM BECOMING THE GREAT MAN OF GOD HE IS CALLED TO BE. PRIDE IS A DANGEROUS CHARACTER. IT CAN LEAD TO A NUMBER OF BAD CHOICES IN LIFE. LET ME SHOW YOU ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW PRIDE AND ARROGANCE REALLY HURT AN INCREDIBLE ATHLETE’S CREDIBILITY. AND IT WAS ALL BECAUSE HE LACKED HUMILITY.”

(show video: The video is about former Philadelphia Eagles Wide Receiver Terrell Owens. I put together a compilation of end zone celebrations, taunts, and interviews. In every touchdown Owens is either signing a football in the end zone, dancing, doing sit-ups or praising himself in the middle of the field. It’s followed by his suspension. It shows the progression of a very prideful person who has zero humility. Then I show a video of my father playing football and the many touchdowns he scored and the records he broke. The difference is Ron Burton never celebrated. In all of his interviews about the game of football Ron talks about how God has blessed his life. The purpose is to show a clear distinction between the fall of a prideful person and God’s uplifting of the humble person. It’s then followed up by Matt 23:1-12)

SERMON con't

“NOW THAT WE HAVE SEEN THESE REAL LIFE CLIPS, LET’S SEE WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT HUMILITY. IN MATTHEW 23: 1-12 WE READ “*THEN JESUS SPOKE TO THE MULTITUDES AND TO HIS DISCIPLES...*”

IN THIS PASSAGE JESUS IS DESCRIBING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE. THOSE WHO PRETEND TO FOLLOW JESUS AND THOSE WHO TRULY DO FOLLOW HIM. YOU SEE BACK IN THAT DAY THE SCRIBES AND PHARASEES WERE EXTREMELY RELIGIOUS FOLK WHO HAD NO REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. THEIR FAITH WAS PHONEY. THEY PRETENDED TO BE HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS BUT IN REALITY ALL THEY WANTED WAS ATTENTION. THEY WANTED PEOPLE TO LOOK UP AND ADMIRE THEM BECAUSE OF THE WAY THEY LOOKED AND TALKED. THEIR WORDS WERE PIOUS BUT THEIR DEEDS WERE FAKE. WHAT THEY SAID WAS NEVER BACKED UP BY ACTION. THEY JUST WANTED THE ATTENTION OF OTHERS SO THEY COULD PRETEND TO BE IMPORTANT AND GREAT. IN REALITY THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES WERE A PRIDEFUL AND ARROGRANT GROUP WHO WANTED ALL THE HONOR AND GLORY BUT NEVER REALLY WORSHIPPED GOD. THEY PROFESSED TO BE FOLLOWERS OF GOD BUT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF GOD IN THEIR LIVES. JESUS SAYS TO HIS DISCIPLES ABOUT THESE TYPES OF PEOPLE: DO AS THEY SAY BUT NOT AS THEY DO. ALL OF THE ACTIONS OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES WERE DONE TO GET THE PRAISE OF MAN. WHERE THEY SAT AND ATE, HOW THEY DRESSED, THE CROWDS THEY WERE AROUND, WAS ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC IMAGE. JESUS SAYS IN V.6 “*They love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogue.*” THEIR PRIDE WAS THEIR DOWN FALL. MUCH LIKE THEIR GARMENTS, THEIR LOVE FOR GOD WAS JUST A FAÇADE. JESUS SAYS IN VERSE 11, “*But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.*”

YOU SEE, YOUNG MEN, GREATNESS IS NOT SHOWN BY WHAT YOU SAY OR THE TYPE OF CLOTHES YOU WEAR. GREATNESS DOES NOT COME BECAUSE YOU WEAR A KNIGHTS’ UNIFORM. **(Knights are the top leaders at our camp)**



(RBTV Knights of Ron's Table 2006)

YOU'RE ON DANGEROUS GROUND WHEN THE LOVE FOR YOUR POSITION GROWS STRONGER THAN YOUR LOYALTY TO GOD. JESUS IS SAYING TO HIS DISCIPLES THAT LEADERSHIP IN GOD'S KINGDOM GOES TO SERVANTS FIRST. IT'S ALL ABOUT PUTTING ON THE BREASTPLATE OF HUMILITY. TO PUT IT A BETTER WAY, IT'S ALL ABOUT HAVING A HUMBLE HEART. LISTEN, GREAT LEADERS DON'T TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO DO AND JUST SIT BACK AND WATCH. GREAT LEADERS DO THE TASK AT HAND AND OTHERS WILL SOON FOLLOW. POWERFUL LEADERS LEAD BY EXAMPLE. POWERFUL LEADERS SET THE PACE. THEY ARE HUMBLE AND LOOK IN AREAS TO SERVE RATHER THAN TO BE SERVED. THE MOMENT YOU EXALT YOURSELF OR SAY, "LOOK AT ME. LOOK WHAT I HAVE DONE," IS THE MOMENT YOU HAVE STRIPPED YOURSELF OF HUMILITY. I CALL IT THE T.O. SYNDROME. LIKE HIS INITIALS TERRELL OWENS "TOOK OFF" HUMILITY IF HE EVER HAD ANY AND "TOOK ON" PRIDE. BUT TRUE LEADERS, YOUNG MEN, DO NOT SHOW OFF THEIR POSITION OR FLAUNT THEIR STATUS. TRUE LEADERS ARE SERVANTS WITH A HUMBLE HEART. IF YOU DESIRE TO BECOME A LEADER HERE AT THE CAMP YOU HAVE TO PUT YOURSELF LAST. REMEMBER OUR MOTTO: GOD FIRST, OTHERS SECOND, AND ME THIRD. A TRUE LEADER YOUNG MEN PLACES HIS NEEDS LAST AS JESUS EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS LIFE AND IN HIS DEATH. AND BEING A SERVANT DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE LESS THAN YOUR FELLOW BROTHER, RATHER ITS AN ATTITUDE OF FREELY ATTENDING TO OTHERS' NEEDS WITHOUT EXPECTING OR DEMANDING ANYTHING IN RETURN. ONLY THOSE WHO HUMBLE THEMSELVES IN AN ATTITUDE OF SERVICE WILL FIND TRUE GREATNESS IN GOD'S KINGDOM. REMEMBER RON BURTON WAS CALLED A GIANT NOT BECAUSE HE SCORED TOUCHDOWNS BUT BECAUSE HE CHOSE TO LIVE A SERVANT'S LIFE. HE CHOSE TO TAKE THE GIFTS GOD HAD BLESSED HIM WITH AND SERVE THOSE AROUND HIM. INSTEAD OF GLOATING OR BOASTING ABOUT HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS YOU COULD SEE IN THE VIDEO YOU JUST

WATCHED, HE CHOSE TO WRAP HIS LOVING ARMS AROUND YOU AND BEGIN THIS CAMP WHERE YOU SIT TODAY.

THIS OF COURSE IS CONTRARY TO THE "LEADERS" IN JESUS' DAY. LISTEN, IN GOD'S VIEW GREATNESS COMES FROM SERVING OTHERS. THAT'S WHAT RON BURTON'S LIFE WAS ALL ABOUT. THAT'S WHY THIS CAMP IS HERE...TO SERVE YOU. AND HE GAVE HIS LIFE AND ALL HE HAD TO SERVE YOU. SO YOU CAN SOAR LIKE AN EAGLE. TO HELP YOU RISE TO THE TOP BY SHOWING YOU FIRST HOW TO FALL ON YOUR KNEES. HIS GOAL WAS TO HELP YOU REACH THE MOUNTAIN AND CATCH A GLIMPSE OF WHAT GOD HAS IN STORE FOR YOU. LEADERS HAVE NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT THEMSELVES.

SO YOU SAY YOU'RE READY TO BE A GREAT LEADER. BUT WHAT KIND OF GREATNESS DO YOU REALLY SEEK? ASK YOURSELF ARE YOU LIKE THE PHARISEES IN THIS STORY OR T.O. ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD WHO SEEK AFTER GREATNESS FOR THEIR OWN GLORY? OR ARE YOU GOING TO HUMBLE YOURSELVES LIKE RON BURTON AND SERVE EACH OTHER IN LOVE? DON'T ANSWER THE QUESTION NOW. ONLY TIME WILL TELL. YOUR ACTIONS WILL SHOW WHICH PATCH YOU CHOOSE. I HOPE FOR YOUR SAKE IT'S THE SAME PATH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES CHOSE. A LIFE OF SERVICE, A LIFE OF GIVING, A LIFE RICH IN....HUMILITY."

RBTV GROUP/PERSONAL ACTIVITY ON HUMILITY

For the next 10 minutes I want you all as a huddle to talk about the lessons you learned from this sermon. Then I want you to write down at least five ways you can display humility during competition.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

PERSONAL STORY:

Every day there is a mad dash for the game room and the lunch line. Everyone wants to be first. In light of the Scripture you read in Matt 23:1-12 how should your attitude change when it comes to these activities? Please explain in detail. (In about 300 words give me a scenario you've already encountered here at the camp and explain what you did then and what you will do next time.)

Each one of these lessons was a sample, but there are also many other activities at RBTV that help the campers become better followers of God. During the final week at camp we highlight all the virtues through activities and presentations. In this fifth week, there are two concerts. One is lead by a local church that visits RBTV every summer to sing and worship with campers. The second concert is performed by the RBTV choir. Our favorite camp songs are song during this time and the seniors stand up and give a personal testimony of what the camp experience has meant over the years. The RBTV concert is extremely emotional and spiritually uplifting.

The nightly Bible study classes are also a critical time during week five. It's here that many young men choose to become born again or re-commit their lives to Jesus Christ. Personal testimonies run deep in Bible study. The campers really open up to one another because they know their time together is coming to an end.

Especially during this week, the leaders and staff find ways to combine team-building activities with the virtues we promote at RBTV. The goal is to keep their attention focused on the four virtues. Even the games we play include the four virtues. For example in capture the flag, each flag represents one of the virtues.

This fifth week is all about helping the campers understand and experience the *peace* of God that surpasses all human understanding. Many campers understand *humility* because they will have realized how far God has brought them in comparison to where they started. They are learning how to be *patient* during their difficult days ahead. And we let them know that despite how many times we fail and sin against God, the Lord remains patient with us. Most importantly, is for the kids to truly experience God's *love* for them and to develop a godly love for one another. Obviously, it takes a lot more than five weeks to even begin to grasp the love, peace, and patience of God. Christ's humility when He died on the cross for the sins of the world will take more than a lifetime to appreciate. But week five is about putting the icing on the cake. For the past month the kids have been in a healthy environment, learning to work together as a family. It's important they leave the camp with these virtues burned in their souls.



(Campers gather for a photo in their new Reebok uniforms.)

Thursday is always the last day of camp. We end our year with an awards banquet where all the parents come and enjoy dinner with their sons. Every camper is given a new warm-up suit and fancy gym bag with a number of gifts inside. During the banquet many awards are handed out. Once again, the four virtues are the focal point of the awards ceremony. The awards are not based on athletic performance but spirit-based principles. Some of our top awards are: The Most Humble, Most Peaceful, Patience Award, Me 3rd Award, and of course the prestigious Ron Burton Award, which is solely based on the virtue of love.



(From Left: campers Thomas Noah, Victor Thompson and Jarrod Burton receive the top three awards)



(Camper David Brade receives Naval Academy Excellence Award)



(Camper Brandon Getchell receives U.S. Military Academy Leadership Award)

Between the concerts, Bible studies, sermons, competitions, and awards banquet our campers leave the village knowing they are special and that God cares for them. They know what RBTV is all about and have a sense of how to live out the virtues we have shared with them over the past five weeks. Now the choice is up to them. The campers must learn to be courageous, taking what they have learned and bringing it back to their communities. The campers have completed the fourth mile.

Now it's up to them to begin mile five, which will not be easy for them. The fifth mile is about taking the Christians values they have been taught over the past five weeks and begin applying them to their

everyday life. Going home is a totally different place for many of them.

But now they can leave with the blessed assurance that God is with them and Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit will be their shelter in times of storm.



(Camper Antonio Alvarez receives award)



(Camper Walter Pope receives award)

CHAPTER FIVE

MILE 5: A CHANGE OF HEART

The thing the really sticks with me is God first, others second and me third. Because it's showing love...its showing you care for others.

Berhe Daniels/RBTV camper



(Camper Jarrod Burton, and leader David Pedra say good-bye)

Saying good-bye is never easy. When the five weeks are complete and the awards are handed out, the campers embrace one another one last time and wish each other well. It's an emotional time. Some cry, others smile, and many can't believe how fast the time went. Although we stay in close contact with most of the campers, a few never return. You only hope the message of love, peace, patience, and humility will stay with them forever. When you look into their eyes and see the smiles on their faces you know they have been touched by something

special. But did a genuine change take place? Has love become a part of their character? How do we make sure the message of love, peace, patience, and humility stays with them once they leave RBTV? These are questions I ask myself all the time. And there is only one real solution: **Follow up and evaluation.**



(From left: Berhe Daniel, Pete McGrath, and Yohannes Daniel)

All summer long the Word has been preached and the seed has been planted in the hearts of these young men. But now more than ever I am convinced that unless someone comes along and waters the seed, the messages we shared with them will begin to fade. My father never wanted the camp to be just a happy experience. He wanted to make sure their lives were changed with the power of love. He wanted to make sure they took the love of God back to their homes, schools, teams, and communities. Jesus reminds us only when the seed is

planted in good ground will a change of heart take place. *“And the seed in the good ground, these are the ones who have heard the Word in an honest good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”* (Lk. 8:15) Our goal at RBTB is to make sure the seed that has been planted gets watered throughout the year. We accomplish this task a number of ways.

MONDAY NIGHT MEALS: WATERING THE SEED

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Ps 133:1)

As the associate pastor of Tremont Temple Baptist Church, my ministry is to reach out to the men of the church and the surrounding community. The Men’s Ministry, or fellowship as I like to call it, is a chance for me to re-connect with the campers at RBTB. In 2006, the Lord put in my heart to reach out to our campers in a new and unique way. The purpose of the Men’s Ministry is to give men a better understanding of God’s Word, to help them live a spirit-filled life. Once a month, I gather all the campers along with other members of area churches to Tremont Temple. We come together inside a beautiful banquet hall for dinner, fellowship, and mentoring. I realized the only way to keep these young men connected is to make sure we reach out to them on a consistent basis. The Men’s Ministry gives our campers the

wonderful opportunity to see each other again, to encourage one another, and to remember that summer is just around the corner. It's also an opportunity to make sure the seeds we planted during the summer become watered. The Monday meal provides me with the opportunity to stress to the young men they are still on their journey. They are on mile-five and many of them are going strong. And the Word we share with them that night provides them with the fuel they need to complete miles six and seven. It's also during this time the campers get a chance to share with me some of the issues they are going through. They no longer have to wait until the summer comes around. They can reach out now and get answers to some of the difficult situations they face. My brother Ron Jr. is also at these meetings, so it's a chance for him to share with the campers as well.

The food is great and fellowship is outstanding. And in typical Burton fashion the campers get a chance to make their own ice cream Sundays. In addition, many times I will have guest speakers come in to share the Gospel message. In the past I have had New England Patriots linebackers Rodney Harrison and Don Davis come and speak. They were real with the kids and did not sugar coat some of the mistakes and trials they went through growing up. They also gave incredible

testimonies of how to live a spirit-filled life while playing in the NFL. Former baseball agent and Boston Red Sox consultant Jeremy Kapstein also delivered a powerful testimony about his life in MLB. As well my brother Steve Burton, who is sports anchor for CBS in Boston, spoke to the group. Each one of these men has a certain appeal and star status that young people admire. And each of their messages resonates with the young men, and helping the kids understand they are not alone in the challenges they face. The speakers reinforce the message of love, peace, patience, and humility we shared with the campers during the summer.

Although the Men's Ministry is for men, I do not exclude the parents from attending these functions. I believe the messages that are given on these nights can help parents as well; they can return home and talk about the message with their kids. Recently, a parent came up to me and said, "Both me and my son needed to hear that message. Thank you for bringing us together once again." But the Men's Ministry is not enough to keep our young men grounded in the God's Word. In order for our campers to live a spirit-filled life there has to be more interaction. The seed must receive nourishment if it one day will blossom.

THE BANQUETS

Two other ways we connect with our campers throughout the year are our annual Christmas dinner and the spring fundraiser. Every year we have a Christmas party held at Fenway Park. At this time the kids meet many of their sponsors as well as exchange gifts with one another. The Christmas party is all fun and games. The campers share how they are doing in school and in their sport.

In May, RBTB hosts its annual fundraiser at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro. The RBTB Humanitarian dinner is really a chance to spotlight many of our top campers. All the young men sit at different tables and share with their sponsors what the village has meant to them. This dinner allows for our sponsors to see what their contribution is supporting. During the banquet the campers who have won full scholarships to college get a chance to share their thoughts about RBTB. The testimonies of our young men are extraordinary. Every year Stonehill College, Bentley College, Northern Michigan, West Point, the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy offer scholarships to RBTB campers. The young men know that these scholarships are an unusual opportunity and blessing. Many of our campers would not be

going to college without these scholarships. Both banquets help the kids see how much God loves them. For these kids to meet extremely wealthy people who reach out and help them is very special. I can never thank our sponsors enough for the love and support they show these young people. This experience shows how my father's vision of *Love One Another* can really make a difference. Our sponsors are touched by the character of the campers and our campers are amazed how generous some people are in this world. It's during mile five we notice a change of heart in the campers. And the change of heart comes just at the right time, when the young men leave the camp, they will indeed find continuing to live with a spirit of love very challenging. It is our desire that the campers meet this challenge with the knowledge they have learned at RBTV. Some have expressed they do just that:

RBTV has changed me as a person just because of the love that is initiated here. They teach how to love one another. They don't just tell you to love but they actually show you how to love one another. They set foundational rules for you to live by. And once you get it, and understand it, it manifests in your spirit and soul and becomes a part of your character.

Mike Warren/RBTV graduate

Love peace, patience and humility are my guide to life.

Ricky Moore/RBTV camper

It's been more than ten years and what I remember the most about the camp is Mr. Burton always saying to us God first, others second and me third. I had an opportunity to play football at West Point and long after your playing days are over the lessons I learned at the camp stay with me. I am still left with character, integrity and striving to be the best I can be in all that I do.

Brett Rice/RBTV graduate

It will be a struggle going home. I am sure my friends will see a dramatic change in me and notice I am different. And I just hope I can make that same change in them. And I now know it is my faith in God that will keep me focused on these four virtues.

Chris Ankley/RBTV graduate

I am 21 years old now and a senior at Stonehill College. And my friends always tease me saying aren't you too old to be going to camp. And I tell them this is no ordinary camp. This is helping me to become a man.

Fabien Queely/RBTV graduate

I struggled a lot growing up. And this camp is nothing like anything I've ever experienced. It's a place where you can get away from the real world, isolate yourself and think about God. It's hard to explain you have to experience it. But the things I learned here have given me the opportunity to go to college at Virginia Tech this fall.

Anthony Hutchins/RBTV graduate

I still can remember Mr. Burton's sayings about love one another. People like nice people. And I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am now at Northern Michigan and I still read Galatians 5 about the fruit of the Spirit.

Cory Cameron/RBTV graduate

This camp saved me spiritually. Growing up I was able to avoid a lot of problems by coming to this camp every summer. The things they teach

you, never to drink, never to smoke things like that to hurt your body. Instead I learned what it means to follow God.

Giovanni Benson/RBTV graduate

Recently I called the parents of some of our current campers. I wanted to know how the young men were doing and if they noticed a change in their sons. The main purpose of the call was to see if the campers were holding fast to values we taught them over the summer. This was also a way for me to gage how much more interaction is needed in the off season. For example, this summer we are planning for the kids to keep a journal when they return home. Thus, journaling becomes another way to stay connected to RBTV. They will also record their application of the four virtues throughout the year.

Most of the parents I talked to are single mothers. Many are having a difficult time trying to raise their boys. Here is what some of the mothers had to say:

Ircania Daneri is the proud mother of Rafael Pena. Rafael has been attending the camp for about seven years and is now on a RBTV full scholarship at Bentley College.

My son “Rafa” is not like other boys his age. He’s a lot more mature. He’s not drinking, or smoking or having sex. He has specific goals in life and wants to achieve those goals. Rafa knows that Jesus is there

guiding him and watching over him. He's proud to call himself a Christian and you can see it in his eyes.

Ircania Daneri/Parent

Tevin Thomas came to us at a very young age from the town of Worcester. This will be his fourth year at RBTV. His mother was deeply concerned about the negative things that were surrounding his life in middle school, he so she placed him a private catholic school. Tevin is in a single-parent home and everyday he comes home to an empty house.



(Camper Tevin Thomas running the seven miles)

RBTV has had a tremendous impact on Tevin. I am a single mom and he really has no dad in his life. So he really enjoys going out to the camp every summer to be around other boys and the leaders. I think he loves the encouragement he receives. Tevin used to be really angry but ever since he started the camp he's not as angry as he used to be. He has definitely grown in the Lord. If he didn't have the camp I have no idea where he would be. He was surrounded by boys 11 and 12 years old selling drugs and carrying weapons to school. I guess God answers prayer even if its one second before midnight.

Andrea Eastwood/Parent

Renee' Young is the mother of Evan and Ethan who both have been attending RBTB for several years now. Their father left the entire family for another man and is still living a homosexual life. Needless to say Evan and Ethan were heart broken and are still dealing with the pain. I asked Renee' how the camp has helped her boys:

The camp teaches them how to feel good about themselves. They are secure, strong, handsome young men. The camp was a replacement for the father that was not in their lives. Mr. Burton and now you all became their mentor. Both Evan's and Ethan's paths could have gone in so many different ways. The camp kept them on the best path possible. I see them using the virtues you teach all the time. They know it and its engrained in them. And the moment any of them start to veer off they always go back to the principles you teach. They are good kids and the values you teach them are instilled in their hearts and gives them guidance.

Renee' Young/Parent

Fourteen-year-old Gordon Bell has also come a long way. This will be his third year at RBTB. Gordon's mother says the camp has been a huge blessing for her son:

For one thing he's a lot more outgoing and patient these days. His grades have improved and he seems to understand what he wants out of life. He used to be indifferent and passive about a lot of things. Today he's running cross country and not only that he's encouraging others on his team to push themselves, which is something I know he learned at the camp. Gordon used to loose his temper, but now when something happens he does not like he pulls himself back quickly and he's in more control of his emotions.

Alberta Bell/Parent

MILE: 6 GOOD OLD FASHION CHURCH!

Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations. (Ps 100:4-5)

Nothing will ever replace coming to church on Sunday. I believe it is the most sacred and important time in the life of any believer. It's a time of praise, prayer, petition, and fellowship. Most importantly, church is the time when God's people receive the Word and Sacrament. The seed that has been planted in the hearts of our young people can get watered in such a special way on Sunday. Dr. Haddon Robinson describes it as a time of face-to-face contact:

Through the preaching of the Scriptures, God encounters men and women to bring them to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and to richness and ripeness of Christian character (vv.16-17). Something fills us with awe when God confronts individuals through preaching and seizes them by the soul.⁵¹

One of my deepest pleasures is Sunday morning. It's also a heavy burden for me as well. I would love to have the campers attend church every Sunday, but some are "not there" yet and others live too far away. As the associate pastor I have the wonderful opportunity to preach at Tremont Temple once a month. Because the campers know

⁵¹ Haddon Robinson *Biblical Preaching* 20.

me and feel comfortable, on these Sundays I invite all the campers and their families. For me personally, the moment is priceless. Because of what I have learned from Dr. Robinson the moment of preaching to your “own kids” is invaluable. I am forever committed to expository preaching, “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.”⁵² Robinson says, and I agree, that through the power of the Holy Spirit expository preaching can transform a life forever:

Preach means to “cry out, herald, or exhort.” Preachers should pour out the message with passion and fervor in order to stir souls. Not all passionate pleading from a pulpit, however, possesses divine authority. When preachers speak as heralds, they must cry out the “Word.” Anything less cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching.⁵³

It gives me no greater joy than to see the young men we work with all summer come to Tremont Temple for Sunday service. They come with their Bibles in hand, sharply dressed, and ready to hear a message from the Lord. I have found this type of fellowship through expository preaching very effective in helping our campers stay on the right path.

⁵² Robinson *Biblical Preaching* 21.

After the sermon we all gather upstairs for a meal and Christian fellowship. This type of consistency is not only a powerful way to keep people connected in the church but also a chance to make sure all of our young men are staying on track. Phone calls and written letters are not enough. Young people need interaction. They need to feel connected. They need to know that even when they are outside of the village, God is still watching over them and desires them to live a spirit-filled life. They need to hear the re-enforcement that God has a purpose and plan for their lives. Young people need that type of reinforcement. Where else are they going to hear that message if not from the pulpit? It is critical for preachers to be aware that any time they step up to speak, souls are at stake. And one of them may be an RBTV camper.

My goal on Sunday morning is not only to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (That's always the goal), but also to challenge our campers to live a spirit-filled life. We can accomplish these goals by helping the campers apply to their lives the message they just heard. Dr. Robinson says personal application is a necessity:

Life changing preaching does not talk to the people about the Bible. Instead, it talks to the people about themselves—their questions, hurts, fears, and struggles—from the Bible. When we approach the sermon with that philosophy, flint strikes steel. The flint of someone's

problem strikes the steel of the Word of God, and a spark emerges that can set that person on fire for God.⁵⁴

Helping to produce that biblical spark is my mission, my God-given call. To help the young men that attend RBTV get on fire for God is my goal. To give them the tools to live a spirit-filled life is my privilege. Through the Men's Ministry and the Sunday services, our campers have the opportunity to stay connected to the camp. And I am happy to report that most of our campers attend both of these gatherings. They see the value in fellowship and the change that is taking place in their own hearts. I am confident as they grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ they will eventually become good old fashion churchmen.

MILE 7: RUN TO FINISH

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or loose heart. (Heb. 12:1-3)

The seventh mile remains incomplete. The life stories of RBTV campers are still unfolding. The seed has been planted and watered but

⁵⁴ Robinson *Making A Difference In Preaching* 94.

it is God who causes the growth. (I Cor. 3:7) Each young man has incredible potential to fulfill. Most have not even begun to tap the surface of the great things the Lord has in store for them. They began *Mile 1 saying Help Can Anyone Hear Me?* Many are now realizing that God hears their cries for help and is willing to walk side-by-side with them through the power of the Holy Spirit. *“For Thou are my hope: O Lord God, Thou art my confidence from my youth. By Thee I have been sustained from my birth; Thou art He who took me from my mother’s womb; My praise is continually of Thee” (Ps. 71:5-6).* Our campers have come a long way, but they also have many challenges ahead. And like Christ, each must bear his own cross. Lt. Bobby Jones of the United States Naval Academy says his experience as a leader at RBTV was an eye opener.



(Lt. Bobby Jones of Naval Academy competes against West Point)

There were times during the seven miles when the young men were actually encouraging me to keep on running. And I am supposed to be here to encourage them. It shows that RBTV is a rare and unique opportunity for them to become and fulfill their potential. And these kids are realizing that God has a bigger plan for them. They are discovering they are not running this race alone, but the good Lord is running with them and pushing them. And there is a reason why each one of them is at this camp. And in the five weeks they are here it's important for them to discover what God's purpose is for their life. And once they discover their purpose there is nothing they can't accomplish.

Lt. Bobby Jones/ U.S. Naval Academy

I know if they keep their focus on the Lord, nothing will stop them from becoming the great men of God they are called to be. Yes, mile seven is incomplete but our young men are going strong. With *love, peace, patience, and humility* they will reach their goals. When they put their

faith and trust in Christ, they will learn what it means to live a spirit-filled life. No one said it will be easy.

The road will be arduous.

The hills will be steep.

But our young men are all used to that... Like Ron Burton, they've been "training" at a "village" every summer.

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VITA

Paul Burton was born July 8, 1973 in Framingham, Massachusetts. Paul is the youngest of five children of Ron and JoAnn Burton. Paul attended Northwestern University and received his BA in communications and a graduate degree from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. Paul was a punter for the Northwestern Wildcats and was a part of two Big Ten Championships. Paul also received his Master of Arts in Urban Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Center for Urban Ministry Education) in 2002. Paul spent three years in the Doctor of Ministry program and received his degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in May 2007. Currently, Paul is a reporter for CBS News in Boston. He also directs The Ron Burton Training Village.
